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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to examine and describe the knowledge and beliefs of elementary school teachers and students regarding the acquisition of reading comprehension skills during reading instruction and the application of those skills during social studies instruction. One teacher and 26 fourth and fifth grade students were observed daily over a four-month period. The focus of the observations was on the reading group discussion sessions that the teacher conducted with each of nine reading groups in the classroom. Interviews were also conducted with the teacher and with individual students. The results indicated that the teacher had developed a teaching perspective that revolved around the use of discussion of story content to teach the comprehension skills that he deemed important for lifelong reading. He had organized his social studies instruction around the practice and application of those skills. He used several plans for grouping students for instruction, and had developed his own materials for teaching comprehension. The children's ideas concerning reading and reading instruction included the following: (1) reading is comprehension, (2) reading is reading aloud, (3) workbook exercises do not help in understanding a story or in developing reading skills, (4) children who read aloud with the teacher have difficulty with reading, and (5) reading skills learned in elementary school will help in high school. (Excerpts from teacher/student discussions are appended.) (FL)

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Technical Report No. 579

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF THE ACQUISITION AND APPLICATION OF READING SKILLS IN ONE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM

by

Roger G. Eldridge Jr.

Report from the Project on
Studies in Language: Reading and Communication

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Abstract

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF THE ACQUISITION AND APPLICATION OF READING SKILLS IN ONE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM

Roger Gilbert Eldridge Jr.

Under the Supervision of Professor Wayne R. Otto

The purpose of this study was to describe and examine the cultural knowledge, beliefs, ideas, and actions of the inhabitants of one elementary school classroom regarding the acquisition of reading comprehension skills during reading instruction and the application of those reading skills during social studies instruction. The study, an ethnographic inquiry, was conducted in a school located in a middle and upper middle class neighborhood in a small Midwestern city. The participants in the study were one teacher and twenty-six fourth and fifth graders in one classroom. The techniques of observation and interviewing were used to gather data. Reading and social studies instruction were observed daily for a four month period. The focus of the observations was on the reading group discussion sessions that the teacher conducted with each of nine reading groups he maintained in his classroom. Interviews with the teacher and with individual children were also conducted.

Three one and one half hour interviews with the classroom teacher were conducted during the course of the study. The

purpose of the teacher interviews was to obtain information about the teacher's knowledge and beliefs about reading and reading instruction. Through the observations and interviews several characteristics of the teacher's knowledge, beliefs, and teaching practices were observed: (a) the use of group discussions of the story content to teach the reading comprehension skills which the teacher deemed important; (b) the introduction and use of reading comprehension skills different from those present in the commercially published texts the teacher used; (c) the grouping of children for instruction based on their demonstrated reading ability; (d) the meeting with each reading group every other day or in one instance only once per week; (e) the organization of social studies discussion sessions around the practice and application of the comprehension skills taught in reading comprehension.

Interviews with the children were conducted directly after they had received instruction in the reading discussion sessions with the classroom teacher. The purpose of the interviews was to obtain information about the children's knowledge, beliefs, and understanding about reading and reading instruction. Through the observations of the reading discussion sessions and interviews with the children the following information concerning the children's knowledge and understanding of reading and reading instruction was obtained: (a) reading is comprehension; (b) reading is reading aloud; (c) workbook exercises do not help to understand a story or help to learn reading skills; (d) children who read aloud with the teacher have difficulty with reading; and (e) what you learn in reading in the fourth/fifth grade will help you in high school and beyond.

The purpose of this study--to describe and examine the classroom inhabitants' cultural knowledge of reading and reading instruction--was also achieved in a more general sense. The substance of the observations and interviews that were part of the study are reported in detail. The information that was obtained offers general direction and specific concepts to guide future "full classroom" studies from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives. Such studies should help (a) to clarify further the classroom inhabitants' cultural knowledge, beliefs, ideas, and actions related to reading and reading instruction, and thereby (b) to develop further sound groundwork for seeking and for developing more effective practices in classrooms and schools.

APPROVED: Wayne R. Otto
Wayne R. Otto

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The quality of reading instruction in schools and the reading ability and achievement of children is closely scrutinized by educators, politicians, and parents (Chall, 1979; Gallup, 1979; Neill, 1979). Educators have designed and conducted numerous studies to try to clarify the proper content of reading instruction (Research in Reading, 1974), relationships among selected characteristics of teachers and the reading achievement of children (Ebel, 1969), relationships among teachers' behaviors and student achievement (Rosenshine & Furst, 1971), and most recently, the nature of teachers' decision-making performance and the impact of their decisions on their teaching of reading (Borko, Shavelson, & Stern, 1981). In essence, educators have been attempting to discover the "best" methods of teaching reading to students -- but usually without success. After reviewing the relevant research, Jackson (1965) stated that "the few drops of knowledge" that can be extracted from over a half century of research are "so low in intellectual food value that it is almost embarrassing to discuss them" (p. 9). Jackson's statement is offered to encourage future educators to approach their research problems with a different perspective.

One research perspective which has received little or no attention from reading educators is the direct observation and interviewing of teachers and children as they engage in the teaching and learning of reading and reading instruction. That is, investigators have not directly asked teachers to explain why and how they teach specific reading skills. Equally important, investigators have neither asked teachers for their perspective nor have they observed teachers as they present content area materials to discover if the skills taught in formal reading instruction are in fact expected and/or applied. Furthermore, reading educators have neglected another rich source of information about reading and reading instruction as it occurs in elementary schools. That is, reading educators have not asked children whether or how they perceive and understand reading instruction and the reading process within the confines of their classroom.

The purpose of this study was to describe and examine the knowledge and perspectives related to reading and reading instruction of the teacher and children in one elementary school classroom. Specifically, the intent was to discover the beliefs, ideas, and actions the classroom inhabitants possessed about the acquisition of reading comprehension skills during reading instruction and the application of those reading skills during social studies instruction. The data were collected via daily observations of reading and social studies instruction. In addition to the observations, interviews with the classroom inhabitants were conducted.

Rationale

The rationale for this study is presented in two parts. First, reasons are given for selecting and using an ethnographic approach to conduct this study. Second, a justification is offered for focusing on the inhabitants' knowledge and perspectives related to reading and reading instruction. This is not to suggest that the method and focus of the study ought, in fact, to be treated separately. The topics are treated separately for discussion purposes.

Rationale - Approach

Traditionally, a scientist's initial steps in designing a study are to select and to delineate a topic or problem and to formulate a hypothesis. Then the scientist usually selects the population he/she wishes to study and begins to collect data to support the hypothesis. This approach was developed by scientists who work in the natural science fields, such as physics and chemistry. Bellack (1978) refers to this approach as "methodological empiricism or quantitative research," and he categorizes this type of research under the label of "mainstream scientific ideology." Some of the tenets of this research perspective are: (1) knowledge is discovered only through the use of the scientific method; (2) the only appropriate research methodology is established in the natural sciences; and (3) scientific explanation is causal in nature (von Wright, 1971).

Social scientists, educators included, have relied heavily upon the quantitative methodology in designing research studies. As a result, investigations of teaching and learning situations have tended to be focused almost exclusively on teaching-process variables and student-outcome variables. The implicit assumption seems to be that only quantitative results related to these variables provide a dependable scientific basis for teaching practice (Gage, 1978). Nevertheless, on the basis of a review of the research on teaching-process variables and student outcome-variables, Doyle (1977) reports that few causal relationships among those variables have been consistently demonstrated. Thus, it appears that educators need to look beyond causal relationships as they seek to understand the teaching and learning of essential reading skills.

Recently, educators have been urged to develop and use the principles of qualitative research, such as those embedded in ethnography, ethnomethodology, and phenomenology (Bellack, 1978; Jackson, 1974; Lutz & Ramsey, 1974; Mehan & Wood, 1975; and Wolcott, 1979). One of the principal reasons for the recent emergence of qualitative research has been the need of educators to discover, identify, and understand the reality in which social behavior in schools occurs (Duffy, 1980; Tikunoff & Ward, 1980). What is meant here is that knowledge cannot be divorced from the context in which social behavior transpires.

Cronbach (1975) discusses the concept of context as it applies to research. He states that by employing "systematic correlation" and "experimental control" in research, psychologists and educators have neglected observing effects of human behavior in context. Cronbach contends that as researchers conduct experiments on teaching processes and learning outcomes, they do in fact give attention to whatever variables are controlled. He warns, however, that in addition, researchers must give "equally careful attention to uncontrolled conditions, to personal characteristics, and to events that occurred during treatment and measurement" (Cronbach, 1975, p. 124). As an educator approaches each new situation his first task is to "describe and interpret the effect anew in each locale, perhaps taking into account factors unique to that locale or series of events" (Cronbach, 1975, p. 125). When educators fail to observe the effects of human behavior upon processes or outcomes much contextual information--or what Dahllof (1971) refers to as "frame factors" of a situation--is ignored or cast aside as being irrelevant to the research findings. Dahllof's frame factors are contextual variables such as subject matter under study, the grouping of children, the social and economic background of both the teacher and children, and other similar variables which exert an influence on teaching and learning.

Schlechty (1976) espouses a similar position when he states that educators who focus their attention on teacher-processes and/or student-outcomes ignore not only the influences of the contextual frame factors on teacher-student interaction, but also the reciprocal influences of classroom participants on each other. Furthermore, Schlechty maintains that when educators adhere to the mainstream scientific model of research, they assume that there is a direct causal link between variables, that is between teacher behavior and pupil learning. He claims that educators who make this assumption disregard the impact of both teacher-student interactional processes and enviornmental factors on classroom events.

Specifically in the area of reading research, appeals similar to Cronbach's, Dahllof's and Schlechty's are made. Farr and Weintraub (1974) in a Reading Research Quarterly editorial, argue that research conducted in the mainstream scientific perspective has failed to help reading educators "uncover new relationships or to study more profound questions and critical issues related to reading" (p. 549). They call for the use of methodologies found in anthropology, law, and/or journalism "to study phenomena in the natural setting" (p. 551). Similarly, Nuthall (1974) contends that the exclusive use of a set of prescribed research methods, many of which do not meet the requirements of the problems being studied, limits the kinds of problems addressed and the ways in which they are conceptualized. In conjunction with Nuthall's contention, Jackson (1974) advocates the use of "methodological eclecticism" for conducting investigations of educational phenomena. He characterizes methodological eclecticism as lacking formally stated hypotheses as necessary guides to inquiry. Jackson depicts an investigator using methodological eclecticism when he states, "at least in the early stages of work, he (investigator) tends to meander, looking about the setting with a naive eye, letting the natural flux of events guide his vision" (p. 84). Wolf and Tymitz (1976) in a Reading Research Quarterly Guest Editorial, renew the call to reading educators to use ethnographic techniques in their research. Wolf and Tymitz state that through ethnographic inquiry educators gain an understanding of "all levels of interaction within teacher-pupil dyads" and "will subsequently help uncover what cognitive styles, structures or strategies learners employ in developing reading skills" (p. 10).

In a more recent discussion of the use of qualitative methodologies, Duffy (1981) encourages reading educators to conduct studies in "full classrooms." That is, he suggests that studies be conducted in classrooms in which the teacher and the children can be observed as they interact in the full context of teaching and learning in the classroom. Duffy claims that studies conducted in "empty classrooms," classrooms in which teachers make decisions about instruction and learning prior to interacting with the children, only reveal half the story of what actually transpires in the full context of the "real classroom." As has been demonstrated by Mehan and Wood (1975), a child's perception of a task and the teacher's intention in presenting that same task are often very different. Therefore, in order to discover the beliefs, ideas, and actions of the inhabitants in a setting as regards the task and the intention of the task many participants must be observed and questioned over time.

In response to the ideas expressed by Cronbach, Wolf and Tymitz, Duffy and others, ethnography as a research method for discovering and understanding the cultrual knowledge and frame factors which influence the inhabitants in a "real" classroom was selected as the method to conduct this study. Malinowski (1922) states that ethnography is an attempt to "grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realize his vision of his world" (p. 25). Spindler (1979), in describing how the method of ethnography can be used to answer questions related to schools and/or schooling situations, states that the overall goal of ethnography is "to discover the cultural knowledge that people hold in their minds, how it is employed in social interaction, and the consequences of its employment" (p. 7). Culture is a very broad concept and has acquired, over time, several different and significant meanings. The concept "cultural knowlege" is explained by Spradley and McCurdy (1972) as "the knowledge people use to generate and interpret...behavior" (p. 8). This knowledge is learned to a large degree shared by the teacher and children in the classroom. Such a definition does not limit culture to behavior that occurs only when people are in a group, however. On the contrary, social behavior includes and individual's action that others learn and understand. When a child enters a school library to select a book, the child employs his/her cultural knowledge about libraries, selecting a book, reading, and many other things. This behavior is social because the knowledge is shared by many other people in the school and in the community. Few people would be surprised if they observed a child browsing through a stack of books, although people would find it strange to find a child tearing pictures from these same books. Recognizing and taking account of these things is a form of social behavior. The meaning of the social behavior is taught to each new generation as cultural tradition.

The definition of culture as knowledge affects the way the culture is investigated and described (Spindler, 1979). Consequently, the focus of research shifts from the perspective of an ethnographer as an outsider, ETIC, to a discovery of the insider's point of view, EMIC.[1] Ethnography is not merely an objective description of people and their behavior from the observer's viewpoint; it is a systematic attempt to discover the knowledge people have learned and are using to organize their behavior (Spradley, 1980).

Ethnography, therefore, involves a disciplined study of what the world is like to people who learn to see, hear, speak, think, and act in ways that are different. The purpose of an investigator who employs the techniques of ethnography is to provide description and analysis regarding some aspect of human social behavior (Spradley, 1979). In order to provide the descriptions and analyses an investigator utilizes a field-work approach associated with the methods of anthroplogy as he/she selectively records certain acts of human behavior so as to construct explanations of that behavior in cultural terms.

Rational - Focus

Studies which rely solely upon student-outcomes measured by standardized tests do not account for the children's cultural knowledge or for the contextual factors which affect the inhabitants of the classroom. Neither the teacher nor the children can predict with any certainty what will happen next in a classroom. Plans for delivering instruction are forever changing and unexpected opportunities to attain specific goals are constantly emerging. As a consequence, the classroom teacher must take advantage of any opportunity which may arise and use it to benefit all the parties concerned. Therefore, in order to discover the inhabitants' cultural knowledge of reading instruction an investigator must identify all of the situations--frame factors--affecting not only the children but also the teacher and the subject matter being taught.

The discovery of the inhabitants' cultural knowledge is important for two reasons. When the cultural knowledge is known the instructional and learning processes of the teacher and children can be understood so that direction can be provided in the initiation of instruction which meets the needs of the inhabitants. Also, instruction can be suggested which helps children better understand the content and purpose of the instruction. Another reason for discovering cultural knowledge is related to the implementation of educational programs. Investigators have found that the success in the implementation of reading innovations and other educational programs is dependent on the perspective of the teacher (Fullan & Pomfret, 1976; Wirt, 1976; Zaltman, Florio & Sikorski, 1977). Therefore, in order to attain maximum potential for teaching the content of "reading," the content should be consonant with the teacher's perspective. That is, when the teacher's perspective and knowledge of reading differs from what is offered in a reading program the program is usually abandoned or adapted (Berman & MacLaughlin, 1976). Consequently, a discovery and understanding of cultural knowledge is essential for recommending changes in methods and materials to improve instruction (Everhart, 1976; Herriott, 1977; Mulhauser, 1975; Wolcott, 1974).

The cultural knowledge of the inhabitants' acquisition and application of reading comprehension skills was of special interest in this study. The skills of interest were the skills Gray (1960) identified as the skills which aid a reader to obtain "a clear grasp of what is read." Historically, the teaching of reading comprehension skills has been a predominant activity in American elementary schools (Robinson, 1977). That is, most reading educators advocate some form of comprehension skill instruction as a part of the teaching of reading in elementary schools (Chall, 1967; Johnson & Barrett, 1981; Otto, Rude, & Spiegel, 1979; Smith & Barrett, 1978). Moreover, studies of reading comprehension skills have been of interest to investigators since the early 1900's (Johnson, 1981).

In addition to the attention professional educators have continued to give to reading comprehension instruction, parents and politicians have also come to stress the importance of teaching and learning reading comprehension skills as a major objective of the educational system. This is evident in the adoption of reading competency testing programs by more than thirty-five states as one criterion for achieving a high school diploma (Chall, 1979).

The above are but a few reasons for the high interest in reading comprehension skill teaching and learning. These are very valuable and prudent reasons for wanting to discover more about how reading comprehension skills are taught and learned. Yet, Durkin (1978) provides one of the most compelling reasons for further investigation of reading comprehension skills in elementary school classrooms. In an observational study of several elementary school classrooms, Durkin found that teachers were not teaching their children reading comprehension skills. What she did find was that teachers were merely providing children with guidelines for completing workbook exercises and not teaching the skills. The questions to be asked, then, are, first, What are children learning during reading instruction? and, second, for a teacher who is using a published text containing specific reading comprehension skills as part of the instructional program in reading, What is being done? These questions need to be answered. Johnson (1981) states that in order to improve the knowledge and understanding of the complexities of comprehension a "much more thorough analysis must be made of the learning tasks which face the developing comprehender" (p. 156). In addition, Johnson claims that "all attention to reading comprehension must be in the context of the reality of reading" (p. 156).

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to discover and interpret the classroom inhabitants' cultural knowledge and to identify some frame or contextual factors associated with reading comprehension skill instruction. The study was designed and conducted to allow for the unlimited observation and description of the inhabitants' actions, beliefs, interactions, and activities which were revealed during the teaching, learning, and applying of reading comprehension skills. In this regard, research questions of a general nature were posed so as to focus attention upon the varied activities and interactions of all the classroom inhabitants during reading and social studies instruction. That is, the research questions were sufficiently open-ended to account for the diversity of perspectives and actions of the inhabitants and to allow for the writing of comprehensive descriptions.

In this study three research questions were posed. Each question encompassed a very broad perspective and included several subordinate questions.

> Question 1: What does the classroom teacher expect the children to learn during reading comprehension skill instruction?

The expectations of a teacher, the goals and objectives of instruction, are the bases upon which the teacher's perspective of reading and reading instruction are founded. In addition, discovering the goals and objectives of instruction, observing the overt actions of all the classroom inhabitants, and determining the meaning the inhabitants assign to their actions are essential to understanding the teacher's perspective of reading instruction.

Three subordinate questions are considered when seeking an answer to the first question. First, was there an accepted set of goals and objectives of reading instruction in the classroom which had been determined by an external source? An external source may be either individuals or materials which impose a system of instruction, content, or methods upon a teacher. For example a school board, a school superintendent or a principal may administratively define the instructional goals for teachers. Likewise, instructional goals may be mandated by the adoption of a particular program of reading instruction (Berman & McLaughlin, 1976; Kamm & White, 1979). In each instance, the meaning of reading and the goals for comprehension skill instruction are predetermined for the classroom participants. The discovery of skills and objectives of reading instruction is important to the development of an understanding of what transpires within reading group instruction. The content of reading instruction is used as the basis for observing the behavior of the classroom participants. A second ancillary question asked was: Is there a match between the external skills and objectives and the actual skills and objectives a teacher pursues with the children? A third subordinate question was: What activities does the teacher assign which provide for the learning, practice, and application of specific comprehension skills? The objective of each ancillary question is to uncover data about the formation and development of the teacher's perspective of reading instruction.

> Question 2: What overt behaviors do the children engage in while working on reading comprehension activities?

The objective in raising this question was to obtain an understanding of the children's actions and interactions during instruction intended to improve comprehension. Two important factors which affect the children's actions and interactions were considered. First, specific environmental factors which affect children as they act and react to various situations within the community, school,and classroom needed to be identified. Too often environmental factors are considered incidental and of little relevance in the discovery of the children's perspective of the skill of reading (Metz, 1978; Ogbu, 1974; Peshkin, 1978). A second factor which affects children's actions and interactions are the children's strategies for communicating, completing assignments, and using the reading skills they have learned. The strategies children employ often influence not only instructional approaches but also classroom organization, rules of behavior, social friendships and other frame factors which affect the inhabitants of a classroom. Important frame factors needed to be identified and described.

> Question 3: What do the teacher and children in the classroom verbalize about their individual perspectives of reading comprehension instruction and the application of the reading comprehension skills in a content area, social studies?

The purpose of this question was twofold. The first objective was to verify the investigator's observations of the classroom inhabitants during the reading group sessions. A second purpose was to obtain first-hand reports of the classroom inhabitants about their beliefs, ideas, and actions regarding reading and social studies instruction.

The chapters which follow this introduction are what Geertz (1973) refers to as the "thick descriptions" from observing and interacting with twenty-seven inhabitants of an elementary school classroom. The descriptions reveal the inhabitants' cultural knowledge of reading and reading instruction. Also, the descriptions illustrate the perspectives the inhabitants possess about teaching, learning, and applying reading comprehension skills.

CHAPTER II

THE SETTING: CAPITAL CITY'S WESTSIDE COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL

One of the first tasks in any attempt to know and understand a culture, whether it be an entire community or merely a microcosm of that community, such as a school or even a school classroom, is to apprehend the cultural milieu of a relevant setting. For example, a school or more specifically, the teachers and children in a school are not isolated from or unaffected by the social, political, and economic influences which affect the eductional decisions and practices within a community. Any one school classroom does not exist in a vaccum but is a reflection of the total community of which it is a part. The elements inherent in a cultural setting such as social class, educational objectives, economic realities, and political convictions are integrally interwoven so as to represent the beliefs and behaviors of all the community's inhabitants. Consequently, before an understanding of the behavior and activities of a teacher and the children in his/her classroom can be obtained, knowledge about the cultural setting, the contexts in which the inhabitants live, work, and play is essential. The following descriptions and analyses are presented to develop a basis for understanding the setting of this study, Capital City, the Westside neighborhood, and Westside School.

The City

Capital City is located in a Midwestern state. The city's population is approximately 170,000 people. The hub of the city is positioned between three large lakes with a fourth lake lying just a few miles to the southeast. The residents from Capital City and the surrounding towns use the lakes for recreational activities. From the central part of the city, the State Capitol Building, the streets stretch-out like the spokes of a wheel. These spokes lead into the numerous city neighborhoods and eventually reach into the surrounding towns.

Capital City's population, in general, is descended from a multiplicity of nationalities from Europe and Scandinavia. The socioeconomic standing of the residents appears to be within the "middle and the upper middle classes." These very generalized social class designations are due predominantly to the number of professional people--lawyers, doctors, professors, and business executives--who have moved into Capital City as a result of their associations with the state governmental agencies and with the state supported University. These individuals appear to possess many of the cultural beliefs and artifacts associated with the middle and upper middle classes in the United States.

Prior to the 1950's, Capital City was a small municipality with a preponderance of farms, small business, and state governmental agencies. Most of the residential and business areas were located to the north and east of the State Capitol Building. Lands to the south and west of the State Capitol were used primarily for farming purposes.

Capital City's population began to expand, however, during the 1950's and 1960's. The expansion was due largely to increases in the size of the state government and to the growth in the number of students enrolled at the main campus of the state supported University. Each of these organizations attracted large numbers of individuals and their families to Capital City. Hence, residential and business areas multiplied. Lands designated for use by farmers within the city limits were rezoned for residential and business development. With the addition of people to the area, the city's governmental services such as police and fire protection, welfare subsidies, and educational facilities expanded many fold by the early 1970's (Capital City Annual Report, 1964, 1968, 1972).

In spite of the rapid growth, the residents considered Capital City to have an appeal as a large town. The wide streets were lined with trees and grass. Natural recreational areas abounded. The number of factories polluting the air were few. Serious crimes, crimes categorized as felonies, were minimal in number. In short, the maladies affecting urban life in the large cities of New York, Chicago, and Boston were not the primary factors of concern to the residents of Capital City.

With the increase in residential growth in Capital City, political subdivisions called neighborhoods were developed. The city government remained centralized around the offices of the mayor and the city council. But, the neighborhoods began to develop, function, and expand in several observable ways. First, the residents of each neighborhood identified with their neighborhood. People formed strong associations with the areas in which they lived. Second, the residents of each neighborhood were able to elect representatives to serve the needs of the neighborhood's residents on the city council. Next, the residents in several neighborhoods incorporated their areas and became small towns within the city limits. For example, Hillsborough gained town status in this manner but relied upon Capital City for various services associated with schools and municipal utilities. Finally, elementary schools were built in each neighborhood. Consequently, the neighborhoods became the centers where adults and children alike were introduced to a cultural heritage. After a public elementary school had been constructed in a neighborhood, the school became the social, cultural, and political center for the neighborhood's residents. Generally, Capital City's residents developed a strong identification with the concept of neighborhood education. In turn, the residents took an interest in and made an effort to maintain and improve the neighborhood school. The residents developed a sense of pride, a feeling of solidarity and ownership of the neighborhood educational system.

In the late 1970's, changes evolved in Capital City. One change was a shift in the population. The city's residents began to move from the city to the surrounding towns. Another change was the significant decrease in the number of live-births in Capital City. As a consequence of these changes, the number of school-age children in many of the neighborhoods declined. In addition to these local changes, the national economy began to experience severe difficulties and as a result Capital City's fiscal position became tenuous. Since the city' education department received the largest portion of the collected property tax dollars, one of the first departments to undergo cutbacks was this department. The administrators of the education department were forced to institute an austerity program.

One of the first actions the educators took was to close three neighborhood elementary schools. This action was taken and accomplished in spite of the vociferous protests of the inhabitants of the various affected neighborhoods. These first school closings were followed in the next year by the closing of three more neighborhood elementary schools and the conversion of a middle school into an elementary school. Again, this action transpired in spite of parental protests. In addition to the school closings, the contracts of many educational personnel within the city's school system were terminated. A total exceeding one hundred and eighty education positions was reduced and/or reallocated in the education department within a two year period.

As a consequence of the school closings, parents' conceptions of neighborhood schools changed significantly. In fact, the notion of neighborhood schools continues to be altered as several more elementary schools are being considered for closing. Residents living in neighborhoods where the elementary schools were closed have lost one institution with which they identified. In addition, the uncertainty surrounding the future of many neighborhood elementary schools and of the teachers in those schools create much concern for parents, children, teachers, and school administrators throughout the city.

The Westside Neighborhood

Westside neighborhood is located about three miles from Capital City's downtown area. The circumference of the neighborhood is approximately one mile. Major thoroughfares form the southern, western, and northern borders of the neighborhood, while a public golf course serves as the eastern border. Westside is basically a residential area composed of single-family dwellings. There are some exceptions, however. A small shopping plaza containing ten to twelve retail businesses is situated about a half block from Westside School. Two or three churches also are situated in the neighborhood. In addition to Westside School, which is a public elementary school, St. Michael's School, a private institution sponsored by a religious organization also occupies a place in the Westside neighborhood. Children from throughout the city attend this school, whereas only children from Westside and from the nearby town of Rochester attend Westside School.

The Westside neighborhood is a very pleasant looking area. Most of the house lots are approximately a quarter acre in size. The houses and yards are small and appear to be well-kept. Most houses have car garages. The garages are either attached to the houses or sit separately beside each house. A majority of the houses in the Westside area have been built in the past twenty to twenty-five years. Most of the homes are situated very close to the city sidewalks affording each family only a small front yard. Yet, the streets are lined with flowering trees and grass which gives the appearance of increasing the size of most yards. Many of the neighborhood residents cultivate flower and vegetable gardens in their backyards along with grassy areas which are used for relaxation and play purposes.

Westisde neighborhood is very much a mirror image of Capital City. Socio-economically the Westside residents are individuals from "the middle and the upper middle class" stratifications. Many of the residents are employed either as state government workers, university personnel or they are individuals owning and operating small businesses. In addition to the fully employed, many semi-retired and retired individuals live in the Westside neighborhood. Although there are many children living in this neighborhood a majority of the families are without young children. This is due primarily to the fact that the residents are older and their families have grown and moved to other locations. In contrast to some of the city's other neighborhoods, most of the Westside residents have lived in the Westside neighborhood for many years. There has been little turnover in the composition of the Westside neighborhood in recent years. Therefore, most Westside families have had children pass through Westside School at some point in time.

Westside School is the action spot for the residents. It serves all residents as a meeting place for local political organizations, a voting station during elections, and a meeting place for several service organizations such as Girl Scout troop meetings. Other organizations located within the confines of the neighborhood as well as within other parts of the city often use the recreational facilities in the school and around the school grounds. Westside School serves as an integral element in the Westside neighborhood.

During the time of this study at Westside School, several parents voiced fears that the school would be one of the next schools closed in Capital City. Teachers and parents alike were concerned about the impact the closing of Westside School would have on the neighborhood. The outcomes were not known. Residents feared that with the closing the neighborhood "residents would have no facilities in which to transact neighborhood or community business." In addition, the residents expressed the fear of losing a part of their identity. At the time the study was completed, the administrators of Capital City's schools had taken no action to close Westside School. Yet, changes of teaching personnel within Westside School did occur. The most noticeable change was that seven classroom teachers were to be transferred to other city schools for the following school year. This change was consummated because enrollment at Westside School was expected to decline. In fact, for the better part of two years the enrollment figures at Westside School had been experiencing a steady decline and a shift in teaching personnel was warranted. All of these factors created an air of uncertainty abour the future of Westside School, the neighborhood, and the city's school system.

Westside Elementary School

Westside Elementary School is a long, three-storied red brick structure located in the middle of the Westside neighborhood. The cornerstone of Westside School, according to the principal, was "put in in 1951. It was built as a potential junior high school with a student population of about eight hundred children." Westside School was "the first suburban school built" in Capital City. As a potential junior school several features exist which were not usually included in the construction of an elementary school. First, there is a double gym. Next, a large storage area with an elevator at the loading dock was included. Finally, "the classrooms are big and there's a lot of storage area and there are lots of cupboards in the classrooms." The school occupies a very central part of the neighborhood in terms of activity as "it's highly used community-wise." The school and the businesses in the shopping plaza are the most active areas in the neighborhood.

The central location and the easy access to Westside School has made it an ideal school in which to bus-in children from other areas. With the dwindling student population in the Westside neighborhood, Capital City's educational administrators have resorted to transporting children from the town of Rochester to Westside School. These children arrive by bus each day. Most of the Rochester children who attend Westside School come from the many apartment buildings located near the border between Capital City and Rochester. Very few of these children are from single-family dwellings. The characteristics of the population of this section of Rochester are vastly different from the population of the Westside neighborhood. First, the Rochester population consists mostly of people who work in small businesses in the Capital City area. Next, few Rochester residents living near the city limits of Capital City are of retirement age. Most of the residential buildings are new or have been constructed in the last ten to fifteen years. Socio-economically, the Rochester residents are "basically from the middle class" stratification. Finally, the parents from Rochester, as a group, are less involved in the Westside School parent organization than parents from the Westside neighborhood.

The professional staff at Westside School "has been extremely stable." In the twenty-nine years of existence there have been only two principals of the school. Until recently the teaching staff was composed exclusively of women. In fact, some of the teachers originally appointed to the Westside School staff are still there. The current principal, however, has tried to recruit "younger teachers and more male teachers" to provide a more balanced staff. With the future departure of seven teachers, three of them being the only male teachers in the school, both the principal and the parents in the community have expressed concern. The administrators of Capital City's education department have attempted to address this concern but no progress has been achieved to date.

Westside School is situated on a large open lot. The land is bounded on the back by a major thoroughfare, West Avenue, and on the front by a residential street, School Street. The land between West Avenue and the back of the school building is the central playground or recreational area for the school and the neighborhood. During the school day, the children play in this area at recess times and lunch periods. After school hours, the area is used by the children who live in the Westside neighborhood and by individuals participating in Capital City's recreational department programs for softball and soccer.

One large grassy area of the playground serves as a soccer field. At each end of this field, there is a set of posts with a crossbar. These wooden constructions serve as the goals in soccer games. A chain-linked fence totally surrounds the soccer field except for a small opening on the east side of the field. This opening is the entrance and exit to the field.

To the north of the soccer field is an area marked-off by large wood chips. Several swings and a climbing apparatus made from large thick lumber are located in this area. The swings consist of large chains hanging down from a series of crossbars. The crossbars are attached to a large telephone pole which is encased in a shaft cemented into the ground. The telephone pole is free to rotate in the shaft. The heavy-duty chains are attached to the ends of the crossbar and are free-standing. At the end of each chain, a large used truck tire is attached. Children climb all over the tires when they swing. The climbing apparatus serves as a jungle-gym. According to the school principal, this play area was "designed, constructed, and paid for by the Westside School parents group." Parents worked together on a series of successive Saturdays to build the equipment. In order to finance the construction costs, several parents obtained personel loans from a local bank. The construction of the playground equipment resulted because some of the parents in the neighborhood had felt the play areas around the school were inadequate for the children. To assure that the equipment be long-lasting "natural materials" were used.

The area to the east of the playground equipment area is a blacktopped section. At the west end of this area a basketball court with baskets is outlined in white paint. Also, on the blacktop area hopscotch squares are painted. The school building abuts the blacktop area and since there are no windows in the building at this location the children are allowed to bounce rubber balls against the side of the building.

Two softball diamonds and an open field occupy the area north of the blacktopped section. One of the softball diamonds is finely manicured and kept by the education departments gounds maintenance personnel. This diamond is used by both the children during school times and by adult softball recreation teams during the evening hours. The other diamond is used by the school's gym classes when the weather is pleasant. Most of the open field area is not used by the children. The northern most part of the field abuts the backyard of private homes. A chain-link fence separates the school property from the private lands.

The front of Westside School faces School Street. The front yard of the school is divided into three segments. First, there is an area containing several large crabapple trees. In the Spring, this area is transformed into a wonderland of green grass speckled with small pink apple blossoms. A cement walkway leads to the front door of the school separating the second segment from the crabapple trees. The second area is surrounded by a low hedge with a grassy area directly behind the hedge. Windows of several classrooms face this grassy area. The third area is a playgound for kindergarten children. This kindergarten playground, like the equipment area in the back of the school, was "designed, constructed, and paid for by the parents group." The differences between the two areas are: a) the scale of the equipment is smaller in the kindergarten area; b) the total kindergarten area utilized is smaller; c) large concrete water mains serve as tunnels for the children; and d) a merry-go-round is available for the kindergarten children to ride. A chain-linked fence encloses the entire play area. This area was developed to provide kindergarten children with a play area of their own so they would not have to compete with bigger and older children in play situations.

The wide walkway leading to the front door of the school is where children who are bussed to the school from the community of Rochester congregate each morning before classes begin. The children are not allowed into the school until 8:40 A.M. After the children arrive by bus, they mingle with their friends until the morning bell rings to signal the official start of school. Meanwhile, the children who walk to school are allowed to enter the back playground and play until the beginning bell rings. Each day a different teacher is assigned "to patrol" the front walkway. A common practice of the teacher "on patrol" was to stand near the door and talk with a few children until the morning bell rang. Some of the children who wait in this area engaged in a little play activity. Occasionally, children initiated a game of tag, but it was difficult to play because of the number of people croweded onto the walkway. Most children stood around and talked with their friends.

A teacher was stationed at the front door each morning to provide the children with supervision and guidance before they entered the building. The teacher was present to facilitate an orderly flow of children into the school and down the hallways to the classrooms. Most mornings, however, the children charged through the doors and down the hallways with little semblance of order. The children were usually noisy and some of the children continued to play a game they had initiated on the playground. Once the children entered their classrooms order was usually established by the classroom teacher.

In passing through the front door, one enters a brightly colored foyer area. On one side of the foyer is located a lighted glass display case. During the course of the study, this display case usually contained some artifacts the school children had made in their art classes. At times, there were pieces of glazed pottery made by the children in the first and second grades. At other times, the display case contained small drawings by the children. The contents of the display case were changed often. Also, along the blue ceramic tiled walls of the foyer other items of the children's art were often displayed.

A stairway opposite the front door leads downstairs to the gym area and eventually descends to the basement of the building. The lunchroom, auditorium, and music room are located in the basement area. The basement area is also used as a "storage area for Capital City's education department." In addition, the basement is used as a shelter in times of tornado warnings.

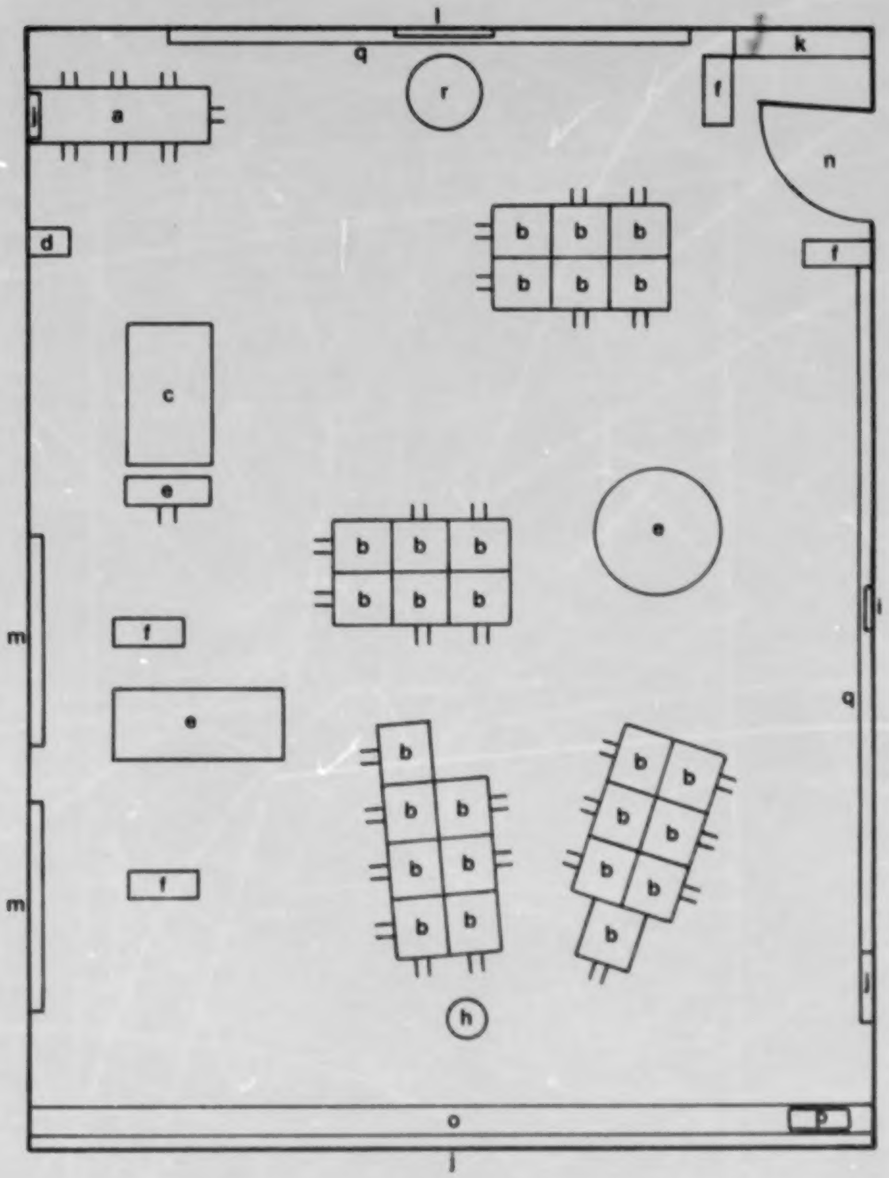
A long hallway exits off the foyer area. The hall is painted a bright yellow color. There are several tan doors leading off of the hall and into various primary level classrooms. On each classroom door the name of the teacher and the number of the room is displayed. The hallway is lined with tan metal lockers which the children use for hanging their coats and storing other materials they have brought from home. Each locker has an identifying number welded to it. In addition, many of the lockers have name tags taped to them identifying the owner of the locker. In the entrance areas to the classrooms, artwork the children have done is displayed.

At one end of the hallway a stairwell ascends to the second floor. The second floor is where the intermediate grade classrooms are located. Again as on the first floor tan metal lockers line the length of the hallway. These lockers contain no name tags like those on the first floor, but have only a welded-on identifying number. Most of the rooms on the second floor are classrooms. There are three exceptions. First, the instructional materials center/library is situated at one end of the hallway. This room contains books, magazines, filmstrips, audio cassettes and other audio visual materials and equipment for the children and teachers to use. Next, the art room is located midway down the hallway. All art classes in the school are conducted in this room. Finally, a small room at the very end of the hallway serves as a storage area for the extra copies of instructional materials. This room is "off-limits" to the children.

The Classroom

The classroom of interest in this study is very similar to the other classrooms in the school. First, there is only one entrance or exit. This entrance is located near the north end of the room. To the right of the entrance there is a small coat closet with some shelf space inside the closet. The west wall of the room contains two large sliding glass windows separated by a small portion of wall. At the end of each window, "tack board" space completes the west wall. A blackboard occupies the entire north wall of the room except for a small tack board near the coat closet. The space above the blackboard is left blank. Another blackboard is hanging on the east wall occupying approximately three-quarters of the wall. The other quarter of the wall contains more tack board space. The south wall is made entirely of tack board from the ceiling to about four feet off the floor. A counter with shelving underneath occupies the space below the tack board area. One portion of the counter contains a white porcelain sink with faucets and a water fountain, or "bubbler." The wall space containing no objects is painted yellow. The floor is tiled in a light tan color. The tack board spaces are dark brown, bordered with tan frames. Three "banks" of white fluorescent lights hang from the white tiled ceiling.

The furniture in the room consists entirely of moveable pieces (see Figure 1). The teacher's desk is a long light-colored oak desk with matching wooden chair. This desk is located in front of the windows. A four drawer gray filing cabinet is situated behind the desk. The children's desks are grouped in five locations around the room. The desks have light-colored wooden



a. Reading Table
b. Desks
c. Teachers Desk
d. File Cabinet
e. Tables
f. Book Cases
h. Free Standing Globe
i. Clock
j. Bulletin Boards
k. Closet
l. Screen
m. Windows
n. Door
o. Counter
p. Sink
q. Black Board
r. Spelling Table

Figure 1: Initial classroom organizational plan.

tops. The tops can be raised on their hinges so that the children can store school materials inside. The base of the desk and the legs are metal. Near the door a wooden filing cabinet known as the children's "cubby-hole" is located. One long table sticks-out from the west wall occupying the space between the two windows. This wooden table is used by the children when they write stories for the teacher. Another long wooden table is located at the front of the class and is used as a place where the teacher and children meet for reading instructions. A round wooden table with metal legs is situated near the east wall blackboard. This table is used by the children during spelling instruction.

Each "tack board" in the classroom is occupied by the children's work. These board spaces are brightly decorated and are identifiable by a title representative of a content topic the children are developing. For example, the language arts "tack board" is located on the west wall near the north wall blackboard. This "tack board" is identified by the title "My Pet." The children wrote stories about their pets and either drew or took pictures of their pets and posted them next to the stories. The science "tack board" on the south wall contains the title "The Solar System." The topics in science are the sun, planets and stars. The children posted pictures representing each element of the solar system. Other tack boards are similarly designed.

This concludes the description of the setting for this study -- Capital City, Westside neighborhood, and Westside School. The next task is to describe the approach employed to discover the knowledge the inhabitants of the classroom possess and use in learning and applying their reading skills in these settings.

CHAPTER III

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a description and analysis of the planning and implementation of a study employing the techniques of ethnography. As was previously described in Chapter I, the objective of the study was to discover the cultural knowledge the teacher and children in one elementary school classroom possessed and employed as regards the acquisition of reading comprehension skills during reading instruction and the application of those reading skills during social studies instruction. Included in the presentation of this chapter is an explanation and description of the processes employed in initiating the study, the techniques and methods used to conduct the study, the processes used to gain entry into a teacher's classroom, an account of other obstacles which were overcome before the initial entry into the classroom, and a brief overview description of the inhabitants who were integral participants in the study.

Tools of Ethnography

An investigator doing ethnographic field-word employs many and varied tools and techniques to collect information. Observation is one of the techniques an investigator employs. An ethnographer observes the behavior of the inhabitants in a natural setting. The tool of observation can be employed in two ways. The first is known as non-participant observation. An ethnographer enters a setting and merely watches the behavior of the inhabitants as they go about their daily routines. The observer is set apart from the inhabitants in that there is little or no direct interaction between the two. Also, the observer usually situates himself/herself at the back of a room or in a corner out of the path of the inhabitants. The observer does not participate with the inhabitants. A second form of observation is participant observation. The observer becomes an active participant with the inhabitants within a setting. The observer, by becoming an active participant, attempts to become accepted as an integral part of the group. This does not mean the observer assumes the role of a native, but he/she participates with the natives while still maintaining the observer's role.

In this study, the observer adopted both forms of observation. For example, when the reading groups met with the teacher, the observer merely observed and recorded the interactions and behaviors of the individuals at the reading table. Each of the thirty-nine non-participant observations of the reading group sessions was also tape recorded so that the exact content of each group meeting was documented. Interaction and/or communication between the children and the observer were non-existent during the group sessions. There were occasions, however, when the children and the observer did interact and communicate to complete a task that had been assigned by the teacher. Situations of this nature frequently arose while the children worked on their reading workbook assignments. Another instance occurred when the children went on an overnight field trip to a state nature preserve. The observer went along on this trip as a participant and as a chaperon. In this particular instance, the children and the observer frequently interacted and participated together in activities directed by the nature preserve guides. Also, an opportunity was provided for some of the children and the observer to share experiences at night as they lodged together in the same "bunkhouse." Other occasions of shared participation between the observer and the children occurred throughout the study.

Another tool an ethnographer employs to gather information is the personal interview. The ethnographer arranges to speak privately with individuals within the setting so that questions about the culture can be answered (Spradley, 1979). Interviews were a vital source of the information-gathering process. A total of three formal in-depth interviews lasting about one hour and a half each were held with the teacher. These interviews were arranged at the convenience of the classroom teacher after the children had left school for the day. The interviews were spaced-out over the four month observation period with one occurring approximately every three or four weeks. The focus of the interviews with the teacher was on the instruction the children had received and the reading and social studies activities the classroom inhabitants had participated in during the three or four weeks prior to the interview. Other information about the operation of the school and classroom and the abilities and programs of various children was obtained from the teacher during informal conversations. Conversations usually occurred prior to the arrival of the children for the beginning of each school day.

In addition to the teacher interviews, twenty of the twenty-six children in the classroom were interviewed at least once. A total of thirty-four interviews with children were conducted. An interview with a child, in most cases, occurred directly after the child had participated with his/her reading group at the reading table with the teacher. The interviews usually lasted about twenty minutes. The schedule of the interviews was designed so that a child would not be taken out of a learning situation in which the teacher was providing direct instruction either to the individual child or the whole class. The content of most interviews with the children centered around the activities and assignments in which they had been engaged during the reading and social studies instructional times.

In an attempt to understand further the reading program at Westside School, informal conversations were initiated with several classroom teachers from various grade levels. These conversations occurred usually before school began or during the morning recess period. In most instances, the conversations were entered into to discover the procedures these teachers followed to provide reading instruction. The discussions also elicited vague descriptions of the reading content in many classrooms.

Finally, a two hour and forty minute interview was conducted with Mrs. Leary, the school principal. Although she was not one of the prime actors of interest, a great amount of time was spent with her obtaining and clarifying information about various aspects of the community and school. The content of this interview centered on the social characteristics of the community and school, how the reading and social studies programs were selected and implemented, and a general characterization of the teaching that evolved at Westside School. As chief educational administrator, Mrs. Leary's knowledge and understanding of the operation of the school and of specific classroom practices were sought to provide an overall conception of reading and social studies instruction at Westside School.

A third technique employed by some ethnographers for obtaining information from and about a group of people in a setting is to collect samples of any documents shared by the inhabitants. The documents may take any form. The documents exchanged between the teacher and his children consisted of workbook pages, sheets of teacher-prepared-questions, tests, and the like. Copies of each activity page, workbook page and notice given to the children was collected and saved.

Entry

Entry is a special problem for an ethnographer. Entry is defined as making a personal contact with an individual or group of people that one wishes to study, and thereby gaining access to the individual or group. Entry often becomes a problem when an observer constantly surveys, over a long period of time, the social behavior of the individual or group he/she is studying. Wolcott (1971) claims that another problem of entry results because ethnographers usually lack an explicit statement of research purposes, which may induce the inhabitants to become suspicious of the observer's motives. According to Wolcott, this condition is especially prevalent in school settings because administrators are very public-relations-conscious individuals.

In the present study, entry became an almost overwhelming obstacle because of the reluctance of a classroom teacher to allow an outside observer to enter the classroom and remain in the classroom for a period of four months. The study was nearly scrapped because of the difficulties encountered in attempting to gain entry.

Early in the design of the study, a list of teachers who had expressed an interest in participating in educational research was compiled. The list of individuals was obtained as a result of previous research endeavors of the faculty at a state university educational research center. One design objective was to obtain the permission of a teacher to allow an observer into the classroom five days per week for three or four hours per day over a period of four months. This request did not seem unreasonable since ethnographers had previously entered and remained in schools or classrooms for even longer periods of time (Metz, 1978; Rist, 1973; Smith & Geoffry, 1968; Spindler, 1974; and Wolcott, 1973). The design of this study was constructed so that the teacher who agreed to participate would not have to alter his/her teaching style, or classroom arrangements, or management practices or any other educational practices. The design was constructed to minimize the infringements upon the teacher and the children in the classroom. The only requirement for the teacher was to allow an observer into the classroom during reading and social studies instruction each day for four months. An interviewing schedule was added to the design only after the initial consultation with and agreement by the classroom teacher.

The first teacher contacted agreed to listen to the study proposal and an appointment was scheduled. Upon arriving at the school, the observer was met by the teacher and her principal in the school lobby. After the initial introductions and an exchange of pleasantries, the three individuals adjourned to the eacher's classroom where the study proposal was explained. A detailed description of the proposed procedures and the time frame for the study were outlined. At the conclusion of the presentation, a discussion between the teacher and the principal ensued regarding a logistical situation involving the teacher's sharing teaching responsibilities with another teacher in the school. The principal appeared to assure the teacher that the problem could be remedied. No further obstacles or questions were posed.

The teacher and principal indicated they were interested in participating in the study. The teacher agreed to allow an observer into her classroom and indicated she would work to alleviate the logistical problem previously mentioned. A date for the commencement of the study was not arranged, but the teacher did indicate she would arrange a starting time once the logistical problem was remedied.

Early the next morning, the teacher called to say, "I'm sorry, but I've decided your study will take too much of my time." She attempted to explain how she felt about the amount of time the observer would be in her classroom, but finally alluded to the fact that her principal had said it would be too much time in the classroom. Evidently the time factor had been a serious consideration for the principal, but neither he nor the teacher had expressed any concern during the initial meeting.

The process of searching for a teacher who would allow an observer in the classroom continued. The name of a teacher in another school was suggested and selected because she had expressed interest in classroom research. Before contacting the teacher directly, however, an appointment was made with the school principal to discuss the feasibility of conducting the study in the school. This approach was taken in hopes of eliminating the possibility that the principal would object either to the content or the time factor involved in the study after a teacher had consented. The principal was very receptive to the study idea and arranged an appointment with the prospective teacher.

The meeting with the teacher was very successful as she fully comprehended the direction of the study and the time factor involved with the amount of observation requested. By the end of the meeting, the teacher had agreed to allow the observer into her classroom for the purpose of watching the behavior of the classroom inhabitants during reading and social studies instruction. Arrangements for a beginning date were consummated.

The next morning, the teacher called to say that she had reconsidered her offer. She stated, "I'm faced with two severe discipline problems in my class and an observer would represent an even greater disruptive potential." The teacher proclaimed a sincere concern for the children in her class as well as for the content of the study. Therefore, the idea of entering her classroom was abandoned. Before ending the conversation, however, the teacher stated that she and the school principal had assembled a list of teachers they thought might be interested in the research proposal. The principal had contacted a principal in another school within the district and arranged an appointment for the observer to discuss the proposed study.

From the outset of this next meeting, the principal was receptive to the study idea. He suggested the name of a teacher who might be interested in the study, but indicated that he could not guarantee her participation. The teacher was contacted, the proposal was explained to her, and for the third time a teacher agreed to participate. Again, this was short-lived as the teacher called the next day to explain that she felt that the interviews to be conducted with the children in the classroom would infringe on their rights to privacy. After talking a few minutes, the teacher was assured that permission for the interviews would be obtained from the parents and the children and that those individuals wishing not to participate would be excluded from the interviews. The teacher then indicated that the observer would be present in the classroom for too long a period of time. This ended the third opportunity of gaining entry into a classroom.

Although each of these attempts at gaining entry and access to a classroom add little to the collection of information that eventually took place, they do illustrate the difficulty of "gaining" access or entering an educational setting. From the above descriptions, the conclusion can be made that some school personnel do not want an observer present in the school or classroom for an extended period of time. Since each of the teachers contacted was assured that changes in teaching style, classroom management, or curricular content would not be required as precursors to participation in the study other apprehensions possessed by each teacher must have been extremely strong. The study was designed to minimize the risks a teacher had to face so as to maximize the opportunity of gaining entry and access.

A fourth attempt to obtain permission to observe in a classroom resulted in success. The observer's major professor arranged an introductory meeting with the Westside School principal, the observer, and himself. The principal was a personal friend of the professor. The friendship was firmly established when the principal had been a graduate student and was enrolled in courses taught by the professor. Once the initial introductions were completed a discussion of the study followed. The principal proclaimed an interest in learning about the social behavior of children and teacher and what transpires during reading and social studies instruction. She mentioned the name of a teacher who might be willing to participate, and indicated she would talk to the teacher about this possibility.

A few hours later, the principal called to say that she had arranged a meeting between the teacher and the observer. She indicated the teacher had given a preliminary agreement to participate. At the meeting, the teacher conditionally agreed to permit and to participate in the study. The conditional agreement was based on the one stipulation that the study be approved by the public school district research committee. Once the approval was received the observations could begin. Approval was received shortly thereafter and entry finally had been achieved.

Once the observations for the study were underway, the teacher was asked in an informal conversation situation why he had agreed to participate. He responded with what appeared to be three well thought out positions or motives. These motives which prompted the teacher to act in the manner in which he did can be characterized as being opportunistic, self-motivating and political in nature. First, he hoped to return to college at a later date to obtain an advanced degree. He felt that at that time he would be expected to do some school research and he would need to gain admission to the schools. Therefore, as a professional, he felt obligated to allow another the same opportunity that he hoped to obtain. Second, the teacher expressed sincere interest in the proposed study. He was interested in learning about the processes and procedures children employ while they learn reading skills. Also, he indicated an interest in learning about the perceptions children posses concerning the reading instruction they receive. Finally, he indicated that his decision to participate was based on his principal's request. He stated his principal had pointed out that learning about the elements which comprise the research process would be beneficial to him when he decided to initiate a research project. Regardless of the teacher's reason or reasons, entry was achieved and the relationship between the teacher and observer promised to be one of mutual cooperation and learning.

Other Obstacles

Prior to the initial observation two additional obstacles had to be removed. First, each child's parents were to be notified that a study was to be conducted in the classroom. Parents were informed by mail of the general content of the study and were given the opportunity to request that their child not be included in the observations and interviews. Parents not wishing to have their child included in the study were asked to return to the observer a rejection form which was attached to the letter. Not one of the twenty-six forms was returned. The only response received regarding a child's participation was from a parent seeking a more in-depth explanation of the study than was provided in the letter. This information was furnished via a telephone conversation. The second obstacle to be removed was to explain to the children the purpose of the study and account to them for the daily presence of the observer. Four days before the first observation, the teacher introduced the observer to the class. At that time, the children were told that the observer would be in their classroom each day "to watch what you do in reading and social studies." Also, the children were told that the observer would talk to each child sometime during the four months of the study about the reading assignments they were completing. The children wanted to know why the observer was "doing the study." The children were told the observer was conducting the study "to complete the requirements for his degree at the University." Several times during the course of the study, a few children questioned the observer again as to why he was in the classroom and asking questions. The standard response was that the observer was doing a study to complete the requirements for his degree at the University. After these obstacles had been cleared away classroom observations at Westside School began.

Inhabitants

The purpose of this section is to present a brief overview description of the people who were integral participants in the study. These descriptions are provided for the purpose of introducing the main participants. Consequently, the descriptions are selective and in certain instances mere generalizations reflecting a group of people. In-depth characterizations of the participants are provided in other sections of this paper. The people of importance to this study are: the classroom teacher Steve Bell; twenty-six children whe were placed under his guidance for the school year; and the Westside School Principal, Mrs. Mary Leary.

Upon meeting Steve Bell for the first time one is likely to be struck by the confidence and determination which characterizes his speech and mannerisms. His initial handshake is firm and tight. As Steve talks and listens, however, he projects an easy smile, from behind a full beard of light brown and reddish brown hair.

During the course of the study, a conversation with Steve was always easy to initiate. He was willing to discuss his use of methods and materials or the abilities and work habits of specific children in the classroom, or the expectations he had for each child. Steve Bell expressed his opinions and feelings openly with whomever he came in contact, children or observer. During conversations about his teaching style and the subject content, Steve exhibited and professed a sense of self-assurance that what he did or what he used to provide instruction was appropriate for children. He was confident in his ability to assess the needs of the children and then administer proper instruction to meet their needs. Yet, Steve was realistic enough to realize that he was not going to evoke drastic changes in the ability of some of the children. For example, Patty, the child identified by Steve Bell as the lowest reader in the class, was initially placed in a basal reader text with two other children of comparable ability. This proved to be a mistake because Patty could not keep up with the others in the group. According to Mr. Bell, Patty "couldn't handle material both the written workbook and the reading material." Although he expressed a desire for Patty to succeed at the higher level, he realized he had to reduce his expectations of Patty's ability and place her in a more suitable basal reader level.

Mr. Bell was cognizant of the abilities of the children in his classroom and attempted to meet each child's needs. He treated each child as an individual and appeared to project expectations of each child based on his/her own ability. For example, Angie was considered to be an excellent reader by her peers, yet, Mr. Bell classified her as an excellent "identifier of words." Mr. Bell was aware that Angie could not reflect about and talk at a level beyond what was written on the printed page. She could not assimilate and synthesize information from various sources in order to make comparisons or draw conclusions. Consequently, Mr. Bell did not place her in the highest reading group even though her word recognition ability and love of reading were comparable to those children placed in that reading group.

Mr. Bell treated the children very humanely. He did not speak in a derogatory manner or yell at the children. He often showed he cared how the children felt when they were placed in uncomfortable or potentially embarrassing situations. While talking to a child Mr. Bell often placed his arm around the child or reached out to touch the child in some way. This was Mr. Bell's method of informing the child he cared. There were many humorous moments in the classroom and although most of the moments occurred at the expense of the children a special sense of compassion pervaded during most of the incidents. No one child served as a continual scape-goat. In fact, Mr. Bell appeared to select carefully the individuals and the appropriate times for exposing a humorous event. During the course of the school year, Mr Bell had identified those children who were able to accept a joke at their own expense. The more sensitive and easily embarrassed children were not used as objects of laughter. As an example, there was the day Kevin had difficulty at the pencil sharpener. Kevin asked Mr. Bell for a new pencil. Mr. Bell handed the boy an unsharpened pencil and Kevin proceeded to the pencil sharpener to sharpen it. Kevin cranked and cranked and cranked the sharpener frequently removing the pencil to see that no point had been formed. As Mr. Bell watched he began to laugh, but to laugh quietly enough so that none of the children in the class noticed the situation. Kevin continued to crank the sharpener until the pencil was but a nub and yet no pencil point. By this time, tears were in Mr. Bell's eyes from laughing so hard. Still none of the other children were aware of what was happening. Mr. Bell finally called Kevin over to his desk and gave him another new pencil which had been presharpened. Mr. Bell knew that Kevin was a very sensitive child and a concerted effort was made to spare the child from an embarrassing situation which was eminently funny.

Mr. Bell not only knew the abilities and sensitivities of the children but also was aware of the problems most of them faced at home. He often described the actions of a child in terms of the child's home situation. One example of this was Missy. Mr. Bell described Missy as a very thoughtful and caring child who was extremely patient with her peers. He attributed Missy's patience and understanding to the fact that she often cared for her mentally retarded little brother. Consequently, Mr. Bell often placed Missy in situations in which she helped children who were experiencing difficulty with a task. Mr. Bell characterized and came to understand other children in a very similar manner. When interacting with the children, Mr. Bell was sensitive to and knowledgeable about each child in terms of ability, interest, and home situation.

Mr. Bell did have his demanding side, however. When he made an assignment he expected each child to complete the assignment on time. When assignments were not finished on time the children faced the consequences. One day Mr. Bell was to meet with the most advanced reading group of children. The children were to discuss several chapters of a book which had been assigned the week before. As the children were called to the front reading table, Monica told Mr. Bell she had not finished the assignment. Mr. Bell sent her back to her desk to complete the assignment while the rest of the reading group members met to discuss the chapters. In addition to sending her back to her desk, Mr. Bell sent a note to Monica's parents explaining the situation concerning their daughter. Mr. Bell frequently alerted parents that their children were not doing or completing their assigned work. In conversations with Mrs. Leary, the school principal, some parents had indicated to her that they appreciated Mr. Bell's keeping them informed. Mr. Bell tried to impress upon the children the importance of completing their work on time.

One of the main goals Mr. Bell tried to achieve with the children was to have them develop an independence to deal with contingencies as they arose. In order for the children to make decisions, he allowed them much freedom. When the freedom to make decisions was abused, the children were made aware of their transgressions. An illustration of this involved the children returning from an art class. Most days when the children returned they were chattery. Usually, Mr. Bell asked the children to quiet down before he began the next activity. One day, however, he sat at his desk and waited approximately five minutes for the children to quiet down. Once the children realized Mr. Bell was waiting for them, he explained in a rather calm voice that since they had taken five minutes of his time he would take some of their time. Then, he proceeded from desk to desk emptying on the floor the contents of any desk that was messy. He explained that the children could pick up their materials during their lunch time. The children sat in a state of disbelief but evidently realizing they had gone beyond their limits of freedom. The next time they came back from art class, the room was totally silent with the exception of shuffling feet. Other instances in which children violated the freedoms extended to them or could not handle their independence were met with similar consequences.

Although the above is not a complete description of Mr. Bell as a person, some of his essential personal qualities and teacher characteristics are illustrated. A more in-depth description and analysis of his teaching and relationship with the children in his class is presented later in this paper.

Twenty-six children shared the classroom with Mr. Bell. A detailed description of each child would be nearly impossible and not very productive, but some general characteristics are presented to provide an overall sketch of the class.

There were eleven boys and fifteen girls in Mr. Bell's class. The class was a mixture of sixteen fourth grade children and ten fifth graders. According to Mrs. Leary, the composition of the class was created because of the declining enrollments in grades four and five, and the impossibility of hiring a teacher for each grade level. The decision to create this "multi-aged grouping was made basically because of finances." Mrs. Leary selected Mr. Bell to teach this class "because I felt that he had the ingredients that could cause a combination class to go. He's flexible, he's creative, he knows his curriculum, he's a very child-oriented teacher."

Thirteen of the children lived in the Westside neighborhood while the other thirteen class members were bussed from nearby Rochester. The parents of the latter children paid taxes to Capital City's Department of Education for the right to send their children to Westside School. This arrangement was consummated because Rochester, a very small township, had not constructed or maintained elementary schools at the time of the study. Therefore, the Rochester residents sent one third of their school-aged children to the Capital City schools to receive their education. The remaining school-aged children of Rochester attended schools in two other nearby towns.

Both Mrs. Leary and Mr. Bell classified the children, in terms of general academic ability, as being above average. What this meant in terms of reading ability and the assigned basal reader levels of each child was as follows: a) one child worked in a third grade reader level; b) one child was reading in a fourth grade level; c) thirteen children were working in various books at the fifth grade level; d) six children were reading in a sixth grade reader level; and e) five children had completed successfully all of the levels of the basal reader program. These five children were reading and discussing the content of library books which were selected by Mr. Bell. The reading levels of the children ranged from approximately the third grade level to above the sixth grade level. Most of the children were clustered around the fifth grade reader level and above (see Table 1).

As previously mentioned, the children in Mr. Bell's classroom arrived at Westside School from two very different locations. Half of the children were from the Westside neighborhood, and the other half came from the Rochester area. When the children entered Westside School they brought with them the friendships they had established in their own communities. Consequently, there emerged two very distinct groups of children. The two groups transcended the grade level designations, however. Mr. Bell had devised group arrangements which integrated the children. For example, fourth and fifth graders sat and worked together in groups arranged according to desk placements within the classroom.

Table 1

The Children's Assigned Reading Text Level in Mr. Bell's Classroom

Children	Children's Grade Level	MacMillan Text/Level	MacMillan Text Readability
Patty	4	Endings/18	3
Matt	4	Cycles/22	4
Shawn	5	Moments/25	5
Andrea, Missy	4	Birds and Beasts/26	5
CJ, Crystal, Christine, Amy, Scott, Tracy	4	Wonders/28	5
Angie, Mike	5	Outlets/29	5
Susie, Gini	4	Outlets/29	5
Holly,	5	Awakening/31	6
Jimmy	4	Awakening/31	6
Kevin,Doug	4	Inroads/34	6
Laura	5	Inroads/34	6
Paul, Josh, Karl, Lezlie, Heather	5	*The Yearling*	-
Monica	4	*The Yearling*	-

In addition, all the children worked together on various projects within the curricular areas of reading, mathematics, spelling, language arts, and science. There was, however, a division of the children based on grade level designations in the area of social studies. In this singular instance, fourth graders worked together using their materials while fifth graders completed different assignments in another group.

Although the formation of instructional groups was controlled by the teacher, incidents occurred within the classroom in which the children exhibited arrangements of self-imposed differentiation. In general, the children from Rochester made efforts to work together with friends from their community and to play and interact with each other during recess and other times in which they had a choice. On the playground during a softball game for instance, the boys from Rochester almost always selected their friends from that area when forming a team. An intermingling of boys from both communities occurred infrequently. Likewise, the children from the Westside neighborhood seemed to interact and work together more frequently too. During the personal interviews, some children were asked to name their best friends from the classroom and invariably they selected a child from their own neighborhood or community. The children from one community often expressed the feeling that they really did not know very well the children from the other community. A possible reason for the existence of this situation was the fact that although there were no visible altercations between the groups or even between individuals from the groups a lack of communication and interaction existed. This is not meant to imply, however, that the classroom was a cold unfriendly place. This was not the case. The lack of communication and interaction between the children indicated that the children from one community had established strong bonds with individuals from within their own territory. The ties with members of the other community were less strong.

As regards academic ability, the only visible differentiation as to community membership occurred in the reading groups. According to Mr. Bell, such distinctions did not exist. He maintained that the children had been placed in their reading groups based upon the results of a reading skills test administered at the beginning of the school year. The list of group placements indicated that the children from the Westside neighborhood dominated the upper reading levels. In fact, only one child from the Rochester area was placed in the top reading group. The middle level reading groups were composed exclusively of children from the Rochester area. Finally, an equal number of children from each of the two communities occupied the lower level reading groups. Based on reading ability, as perceived by the teacher, the children from the Westside community were judged more academically able to read than the children from the Rochester area.

This may have been one of the factors which contributed both to the selection of friends and to the membership of the student initiated groups. A more in-depth view of the various reading groups and other academically oriented groups will be presented later in this paper.

Another individual of interest at Westside School is the Principal Mrs. Mary Leary. Although she was not observed directly in her position as principal, she did provide significant verbal information concerning the reading and social studies programs at Westside School. In addition, she expressed her views about the kind and quality of teaching the parents of Westside School expected and the quality of teaching that emanated from the school.

Mrs. Leary is a very personable woman. She was very receptive to the idea of educational research being conducted in her school. In this regard, she was cooperative and willing to share some of the most intricate details involved in administering an elementary school in Capital City. She had been the Westside Principal for six years and in that capacity had instituted changes in the educational operation at Westside. Prior to her service as a principal, Mrs. Leary served as a reading consultant in Capital City's central office of education. Before that, she worked as a first grade teacher in an elementary school. Mrs. Leary had received her Ph.D. in reading from the state University just before assuming her principalship position.

In her six years as Principal, Mrs. Leary attempted to alter the learning and teaching environments at Westside School. One of her missions was "to change the traditional philosophy to a degree and the picture the community had of Westside School. It was also a mission given to me by the Central Office (Superintendent's Office)." Much of the impetus for many of the alterations was provided by the influential parents' group of the school. The parents were very active and undertook many tasks to improve some of the physical elements, such as the playground equipment and student furniture, at the school. Furthermore, the parents expressed frequent interest in the quality of education that was being provided. The parents and the school staff had "a strong philosophy...of self-contained situation, meaning that the children stay with their regular teacher all day except for music, art, and physical education." Consequently, when the idea of grouping fourth and fifth grade children together in one classroom was suggested, the parents became concerned that the children would not receive adequate preparation in all the academic areas. "They have a very old unsophisticated feeling about what happens in a combination classroom." Mrs. Leary met with groups of parents to reassure them that their concerns would be addressed, and the needs of the children at each grade level would be met.

Mrs. Leary spent a great deal of time serving as a public relations expert disseminating all types of announcements and information to the community concerning Westside's educational program. Although some parents wanted reassurance that their children were receiving traditional education many others were concerned that the teachers were too traditional in their approach. In regard to this, Mrs. Leary developed the role of negotiator in attempting to implement changes in the educational program. The negotiations often resulted in the maintenance of tradition, however. The multi-graded approach was a case in point. This change was proposed primarily because of economic pressures, but it was also viewed as being beneficial to the children. Many parents were not receptive to this idea, and the commitment of the school faculty was almost nonexixtent. For example, Mr. Bell experienced difficulty in establishing the multi-graded approach because many parents insisted that their children be provided separate graded content materials in social studies. In another instance, Mrs. Leary attempted to negotiate the creation of a gifted and talented program. Each Friday afternoon time was set aside when everyone in the school would take "time out" to work on a "creative project." This was an attempt to encourage the teachers to view their instruction differently. The program lasted but a short time because the teachers were not committed to the idea. Mrs. Leary commented, "the enthusiasm for the concept wore off because I was not always present to oversee the activities."

Another area of interest to Mrs. Leary has been reading instruction. Her involvement in reading curriculum transcended the Westside School reading program. In fact, she served on a committee that was instrumental in adopting and implementing the MacMillan R Reading Program in Capital City's schools. Mrs. Leary's basic philosophy concerning reading instruction revolves around three notions. First, reading is a skill process. That is, reading is composed of many individual skills, and children must learn and apply the skills. Second, teachers must individualize reading instruction. The basic concept here is that teachers must use more than the traditional three reading groups to adequately meet the needs of all the children within the classroom. Finally, reading is to be taught using a single text series instead of employing a multi-text approach. Mrs. Leary claimed that teachers "individualize more with the unitext adoption because it's causing us to have more levels (of readers) occurring within the classroom." Mrs. Leary readily admitted, however, that some teachers at Westside School "are still clinging tenaciously to the three group plan." She attempts to negotiate with many of the teachers to change their approach, but traditional practices in the use of reading materials and reading instruction appear to prevail.

In other areas of the curriculum, Mrs. Leary has encouraged teachers to use the "project approach." This approach requires teachers to set goals in specific topics of interest and provide a multitude of materials and techniques to attain the stated goals. This approach was advocated because Mrs. Leary had observed that the teachers relied too heavily on the use of textbooks, especially in science and social studies. She attempted to negotiate the "project approach" with the teachers, but the majority of teachers ordered classroom sets of social studies tests instead. Only Mr. Bell adopted a form of the "project approach."

Mrs. Leary attempted to alter the traditional image of Westside School by hiring teachers who "bring in a new and different approach to teaching than we currently had...." As teachers retired from the left Westside School, Mrs. Leary hired "a so-called open classroom person at every grade level so that we had some more traditional teacher, maybe a modified traditional teacher and maybe a really open classroom person at every grade so that for those persons who wanted an open classroom situation for their children they could have it all the way through Westside." Mrs. Leary thought this concept had been achieved "to a degree, but not completely." What she had succeeded in accomplishing was to bring in a "variety of staff members who use a different teaching style...." But the content of the curriculum remained virtually unchanged.

Mrs. Leary attempted to negotiate changes but the educational program in general appeared to be built around traditional ducational approaches. Mrs. Leary's efforts were summed up in the following quote from the interview with her:

> You know the funny part of it is people think that if you're principal of the school you know everything that happens in a school. I hate to tell you I can't say that. I do try to spend time in classrooms, but when I'm in the room things happen differently than they did the day before or the day after....

The above cursory descriptions and analyses of the ethnographic method and the inhabitants selected for this study has provided background for the further investigation of reading instruction and the learning of reading skills in an elementary school classroom. The following chapter is an in-depth view of the teacher's characteristics and processes and procedures he employs to teach children to learn and apply reading skills.

CHAPTER IV

READING INSTRUCTION IN THE CLASSROOM

A logical step in the progression of trying to understand and describe the cultural knowledge inhabitants in one elementary school classroom possess and use relative to reading instruction is to characterize the reading behaviors and activities of the inhabitants during the instructional periods. To attempt to describe the behaviors and activities of each inhabitant in the setting is impossible. Therefore, the following is a discussion of three of the nine reading groups which exist in Mr. Bell's classroom. A description of each of the three groups of children is presented for the following reasons. First, each group represents a separate and different category of general reading ability within the classroom. Second, each of the three reading groups is described so as to illustrate the different teaching approaches Mr. Bell employed to teach children specific reading skills. Finally, the characterizations of each of the three groups are presented as being representative of the behaviors and activities of all the reading groups in the classroom. A transcription of one instructional session of each of the three reading groups is provided in Appendix A.

General Procedures for Reading

Before describing the activities of each specific reading group, however, the general overall organizational patterns and procedures associated with reading instruction as envisioned and employed by Mr. Bell must be known. "Reading time" occurred each day from 8:45 A.M. to 10:00 A.M.. During that time, the children were expected to complete the reading assignments Mr. Bell dispensed during the reading group sessions. In most instances, the assignments the children were given consisted of reading a story from their basal reader text and completing the workbook pages which accompanied each story. Sometimes, the children of one group were asked to complete an "extra assignment." One example of an extra assignment was to describe the story illustrations. That task consisted of looking at each picture in the story the children had just read and then locating a sentence from the story text to describe each picture. Another example of an extra assignment for the children was for them to write a short paper or paragraph detailing their understanding of the purpose the author had envisioned in writing the story. Still another example of an extra assignment the children completed was to write the "climax of the story" they had read. No pattern of frequency was established for dispensing extra assignments, but most reading groups completed one of the above assignments at least once during the course of the observational period. If the children finish all of their assignments before they were to meet in the reading group again, Mr. Bell encouraged the children to read library books for their language arts and book report assignments or to read just for pleasure. Mr. Bell expected all the children in the classroom to be reading during the reading time.

After allowing the children three weeks at the beginning of the school year, "to get comfortable in the room," Mr. Bell administered a series of reading tests to each child. The tests were criterion-referenced reading skills tests procured from the materials provided in the MacMillan R Reading Program (Smith and Wardhaugh, 1975). According to Mr. Bell, he had "two purposes in mind when I gave these tests." The first purpose was "to assess the reading skill abilities and needs of the kids at various (reading) levels provided by the MacMillan R Program." The second purpose was "to see improvements or regressions" in the children's reading abilities after being out of school over the summer vacation period. As regarded the second purpose, Mr. Bell sought information about the current reading abilities and levels of the children so as not to relay too heavily upon a previous teacher's judgment. The array of scores the children achieved ranged from "the low third grade reading level," MacMillan text level seventeen, to "above the sixth grade reading level," MacMillan text level thirty-six.

The MacMillan R Reading Program (1975) is a basal reader program. The program consists of thirty-six specific levels of reading. Each level is a separate text. The thirty-six levels are grouped into six grade levels. For example, text levels twenty-five to thirty are designated for use by children in the fifth grade. The content of the program is based on the teaching and learning of specific reading skills in the areas of decoding, vocabulary development, comprehension, and study skills. Each of the thirty-six text levels of the MacMillan R Reading Program is composed of a number of stories and poems appropriate for children reading at a particular ability level. According to the authors of the program, the stories in a separate text level have a specific range of readability. For example, text level twenty-five is the first text of the fifth grade level. The readability of the stories in text level twenty-five may range from 4.8 to 5.2 or some similar readability range. The readability of the texts and consequently the stories are based on the difficulty of the vocabulary and the syntactic difficulty, which is measured by sentence length (Fry, 1977). The MacMillan R Program includes a workbook for each text level. The workbook consists of written excercises to be used for learning and practicing the reading skills which are contained in the Program. In addition, the Program authors included a series of criterion-reference pre-assessments of reading skill ability at each text level. Also, a collection of practice worksheets based on the Program's list of reading skills is provided. The texts formed the major part of Mr. Bell's classroom reading program.

Once the criterion-referenced tests were administered and scored, Mr. Bell grouped the children into nine independent and different levels of reading ability within the MacMillan R Reading Program. The decision to place children together in groups was based on the achievement and needs of each child as revealed on the criterion-referenced tests. The following is a description of the composition of the groups at the various reading levels as the observations commenced. The reader will note that the conventional meaning and use of the word "group" is not used in this discription. Mr. Bell employed the term group to identify the different reading text levels and the children's reading ability levels present in his classroom. Consequently, a group consisted of one or more individuals. The discussion which follows is not to be perceived as a discussion of reading achievement, since reading achievement is discussed at length in a later chapter. This is merely an accounting of the group's membership, the members' reading ability level, and the texts they are reading.

One child, Patty, was reading at a "low third grade level." She was reading from text level seventeen, Beginnings, of the MacMillan R Program. Matt, the sole member of another group, was working at a beginning fourth grade level, level twenty-two, Cycles. Shawn was the only member of another group. He was reading at a low fifth grade level, level twenty-five, Moments. Andrea and Missy comprised another group, and they were beginning to work in a fifth grade level. They had just completed level twenty-four, Moonball. Moonball was the last text of the fourth grade level. Crystal, CJ, Christine, Amy, Tracy, and Scott were a group of children reading at a middle fifth grade level, level twenty-seven, Signals. Another group consisting of Angie, Mike, Susie, and Ginny was reading from text level twenty-nine, Outlets. This was a high fifth grade level text. Holly and Jimmy were reading from text level thirty-one, Awakening. Awakening was the beginning text of the sixth grade level in the MacMillan R Program. Another group, Kevin, Doug, and Laura, was working in level thirty-four, Inroads. This group was reading from a middle sixth grade level text. The remaining group in the classroom was not reading from any text level of the MacMillan Program as the individuals of the group had completed successfully all of the skills tests at the beginning of the school year. A discussion of three of the nine groups is presented later in this chapter. Here, the purpose is to outline in very general terms the content of a reading group session at the front reading table with Mr. Bell.

A Typical Reading Group Discussion Session

While the children worked at their desks, Mr. Bell usually sat at the reading table located in a portion of the northwest corner of the classroom. It was here that he met with one reading group at a time. Mr. Bell did not meet with each reading group each school day. On the contrary, he attempted to meet with only three reading groups each day. Consequently, most reading groups met two or three times per week while some groups met only once per week. Each reading group session lasted approximately twenty minutes from the time the children were called to the reading table by Mr. Bell until the time they returned to their desks to complete their assignments.

Generally, a reading group session consisted of the following tasks and activities. First, Mr. Bell called a group of children to the front reading table. He usually identified a group by the name of one of the members of the group or by the text the group members was reading. For example, Angie, Mike, Susie, and Ginny were members of one reading group. Mr. Bell invariably referred to that group as "Angie's Group". Once the children arrived at the table with their reading materials, text and workbook, Mr. Bell directed them to write another title for the story. The story was one the children had read from their basal text since the last time the group had met. Each child wrote a title on a page stapled inside the front cover of his/her workbook. After all children in the group completed the task, Mr. Bell asked each child in the group to discuss the title he/she had selected. In conjunction with the title discussion, a more thorough review of the story ensued. Following the discussion, Mr. Bell asked the children to open their workbooks to a specific page. Usually, the page was a vocabulary pretest exercise which the children were asked to complete. A vocabulary pretest consisted of a series of sentences with open blanks and a choice of three words to fit into each blank to complete the sentence. The words that fit into the blanks were words the children would encounter as they read the next text story. The children completed the pretest page by themsleves. Then, Mr. Bell and the children surveyed the pretest together with the children making corrections of words they had identified incorrectly. Next, Mr. Bell read the directions for each workbook page he expected the children to complete. The pages were designed to accompany the basal text story the children were to read. Once the directions were read, Mr. Bell told the children when the completed workbook pages were to be submitted to him. He also assigned a date when the group would meet to discuss the story. If an extra assignment was to be given Mr. Bell made that assignment then. Mr. Bell dismissed the group and the children returned to their desks to begin their assignments. Mr. Bell then called another reading group to the front table and proceeded through the same process again.

The Yearling Reading Group

The intent is to describe in detail the activities of three of the reading groups present in Mr. Bell's classroom. As stated earlier, each reading group was representative of all the reading groups in the classroom. Therefore, three types of readers are identified: a) appliers; b) tacit appliers; and c) non-appliers. The characteristics of each type of reader is explained in the context of the descriptions of each group.

Upon discovering that six children "had tested-out of the program," Mr. Bell felt the obligation to provide the six children with instruction and materials outside of the bounds of the MacMillan R Program. Therefore, during the course of the year, Mr. Bell selected specific "trade books" (library books) for the group of children to read. At the beginning of the study, the six children were completing the reading and discussing of the book Caddie Woodlawn, by Carol Brink. Consequently, Mr. Bell was in the process of trying to acquire enough copies of the book, The Yearling, by Marjorie Rawlings. Mr. Bell had selected The Yearling as the next book the group would read. Mr. Bell was experiencing some difficulty in obtaining a sufficient number of copies of The Yearling, however. One problem was that the school librarian was able to locate only three copies of the book in the entire school. An additional two copies were owned by Mr. Bell. Therefore, Mr. Bell asked the children of the group to bring a copy of the book from home if they had one. There was no response to his request. After waiting three days for a response, Mr. Bell purchased two copies of The Yearling at a local bookstore. Since the children were to begin reading The Yearling, the group assumed the appellation, the Yearling Group and was called that for the duration of the observational period.

The Yearling Group members were Karl, Heather, Lezlie, Paul, Monica, and Josh. Mr. Bell regarded those children as his "best group of readers" and also considered them to be "just good kids." The children also deemed themselves to be the best readers in the classroom. They demonstrated their confidence when each child, separately, was asked to identify who he/she thought was the best reader in the class. Invariably, each child selected the name of an individual from the Yearling Group. In addition, members of other reading groups identified members of the Yearling Group as the best readers in the class. The Yearling Group members were also the most vocal participants in the social studies instructional groups. Each Yearling Group member seemed capable of reading the material presented, digesting it, and discussing the content of the material during class discussion times with greater understanding than other class members. Consequently, the Yearling Group members often dominated the social studies discussions.

The first day the Yearling Group met, Mr. Bell did not possess a sufficient number of books for each group member to have a copy. He indicated that arrangements were being made to acquire two additional copies of The Yearling, but for the next day or so two children, "Paul and Josh, will share a book." There was little discussion during the first group session since Mr. Bell did most of the talking. First, he described the setting of the story to the children. He told them The Yearling was a story "about some people who talk differently from the way we talk." He also indicated that the children were to read carefully since the reading would often be "difficult because of the different language and the complexity of the characters in the story." Once that message was delivered Mr. Bell assigned the children the first five chapters to read before the next group meeting. The next session was scheduled one week from the initial meeting. No other assignments accompanied the reading. Then each child left the reading table and returned to his/her desk.

The day after the initial Yearling Group reading session, Paul and Josh each received his own copy of the book. The two boys no longer needed to share a book in common. During the days that followed the initial Yearling Group meeting, group members were periodically observed during the early morning "reading time" at their own desks with the book in their hands and turning the pages. Many of the Yearling Group children did not spend the entire reading time reading The Yearling. Instead, several group members used their alotted time to go to the school library/IMC to select a book either for the language arts assignment or a book for the biweekly book report. The time each member of this group spent in the library varied. Some group members went to the library each day while others visited only occasionally. For example, Karl, Paul, and Josh went to the library each day to read their assignments. They read their assignments while resting in the "loft." The loft was an area set aside in the library for children who wanted to read in quiet and soft surroundings. The loft was a two-decked wooden structure. "Throw pillows" had been made for the deck and they served as comfort spots for the children. Karl indicated that he liked to go to the loft to read "because it's too noisy in the classroom." Other children expressed similar reasons for going to the library to work on their reading assignments.

As long as the children were reading, selecting, or working with a book during the "reading time" each day, Mr. Bell paid little attention to the Yearling Group children as they worked. In this regard, the children were left on their own to complete their assignments. Usually, Mr. Bell granted the Yearling Group members one week to complete their reading assignments. Since the children worked on their assignments so well, Mr. Bell had no need to reprimand any of the Yearling Group members for not working. The children worked independently. That is, they decided on their own when and how much of their assignment they would read each day in order to observe Mr. Bell's deadline for completing the work. That type of independence by Yearling Group members occurred not only in reading but also in all other subject areas. Once an assignment of any kind was made and a time limit for completing the assignment specified, the children in the Yearling Group were left on their own to complete the work. In most cases, Yearling Group members accomplished their tasks on time. Monica provided an example of one exception, however. A reading assignment was made, but Monica became so engrossed with reading a book for her biweekly book report that she failed to complete *The Yearling* assignment by the designated time. As the children approached the reading table for their reading discussion, Monica informed Mr. Bell that she had not finished the readings. Mr. Bell sent Monica back to her desk to complete her assignment while the other group members met to discuss the contents of the readings. After the group discussion, Mr. Bell made arrangements to meet with Monica on the next day to discuss what she had missed.

After the expiration of one week, Mr. Bell called the Yearling Group to the reading table. Leslie was absent from school that day and her absence was so noted by the group members. Mr. Bell began the session by asking "....were there any impressions of the book that you've had just so far in reading the first five chapters?" Individually, each member was asked to respond in some way to that question, while the other group members listened. After all members had completed a response to the question, Mr.

Bell rephrased the question, "Are there any other impressions you got from the book or any other feelings from the book?" The interactions, in response to the question, appeared to be spontaneous. Each member spoke up when he/she had something to add to the conversation. In addition, each member was allowed to talk and complete his/her statement without interruption.

Once the preliminary questions were asked and answered, Mr. Bell then asked a series of questions to try to reveal the personalities of the main characters in the story. He asked the children to identify the main characters and to say something about each character the children had met so far in the first five chapters. For each answer, Mr. Bell requested that each child substantiate his/her answer by supplying a fact or detail from the text. For example, Mr. Bell asked Monica what she thought of the Forresters, one of the families in the story. Monica responded, "I think they're just big creeps." To that Mr. Bell asked, "Why do you say that?" The purpose of the question was to force Monica to substantiate her answer with an observation she had made from the text of the story. Mr. Bell often used that ploy to compel the children to relate the text of the story to the opinions they had formed as they read.

As the group discussion continued, Mr. Bell asked several other questions. For example, he asked the children to cite what they thought to be a "humorous episode" in the story.

Another example of a question was to ask the children to identify "a scene from the story that is somewhat sad." After the children made a few comments about sad scenes, Mr. Bell selected a brief segment of one of the chapters he thought was sad and read it aloud to the entire group. After the reading, Karl attempted to relate the sad scene Mr. Bell had protrayed to a situation in which one of his fellow classmate's pet died. For another student, Heather, the scene Mr. Bell read brought back memories of a scene she had read in Caddie Woodlawn. At that juncture, Mr. Bell asked, "Are there any similarities between the two books Caddie Woodlawn and The Yearling?" The purpose of Mr. Bell's question was to have the children make comparisons of the various situations they had encountered in their reading. Then, Mr. Bell and the children spent a considerable amount of time describing and analyzing the similarities between the two books.

During the latter part of the discussion with the Yearling Group, Mr. Bell asked, "How many of you found the reading difficult?" The question was in response to a point Mr. Bell had made the previous week when he informed the children that the reading would be difficult for them. In answer to the question, Karl stated, that the print in the book was small and that the "characters aren't saying much." Monica pointed out that she didn't understand what some of the terms the characters used meant. Mr. Bell followed with, "Yeah, the dialect and customs are somewhat difficult to understand too." One element which appeared to be evident in all Yearling Group sessions was the attempt to relate information obtained from the present readings and discussions to knowledge acquired during previous sessions or even previous books. The Yearling Group members continually applied the knowledge and skills they had learned to present situations and conditions.

The content of the discussion during this one reading group session was presented as being characteristic of all the Yearling Group discussion sessions. Mr. Bell asked the questions and the children answered them. The children, in fact, asked few questions. During the session referred to above, only one question was asked by a child. Monica's question was, "What is a sow?" Mr. Bell's response was,"You should look that up. I shouldn't have to be telling you what that is." All questions that were related to vocabulary were handled in a very similar manner. The children in the Yearling Group were expected to seek out independently unfamilar vocabulary and be prepared to discuss any and all terms that arose during the discussion sessions.

Before the group session ended, Mr. Bell asked the children to write down a few points he wanted them to glean from the next reading assignment. He asked the children to locate the following kinds of scenes in the next five chapters, six through ten: "I want you to be able to describe a heartwarming scene....Can you find a scene that is comical or humorous? I want you to choose a scene that you feel the author did a very good job in describing the scenery.... See if you can locate a simile. And see if you can find a scene that shows bravery." After making that assignment, Mr. Bell indicated that the work was to be completed one week from the present session. Before dismissing the group members, Mr. Bell warned, "Make sure you've read those chapters. This is a very thick book and we're going to move very fast. So make sure you keep up." At that, the group members returned to their desks.

In summary to this juncture, several observations about reading instruction for the Yearling Group members was made. First, specific skill instruction and practice was not identified as such at any time during the group sessions. Next, the children discussed very little of the story among themselves. Discussion was initiated by the teacher, Mr. Bell. Finally, the Yearling Group members were expected to arrive at the front reading table fully prepared to discuss the content of the assigned readings. If a member was not prepared he/she returned to his/her desk and completed the assignment.

At the conclusion of the last Yearling Group discussion session, Mr. Bell gave a test to the children on the content of the entire text of The Yearling. He described this activity to the observer as "trying to see if the children understand what we've been reading the past two months." The test was based on Mr. Bell's conception of the reading skills he taught during the reading group discussion sessions. That is, the questions on the test were presented as a reflection of the reading skills Mr. Bell attempted to teach the children during the discussion sessions. Mr. Bell considered the test to be the culminating activity in the area of reading for the Yearling Group. A transcription of the Yearling Group test is provided in Appendix A.

Appliers of Reading Skills

The children assigned to the Yearling Group were appliers of reading skills. An applier was an individual who identified reading skills, defined and/or described the skills, used the reading skills to complete assignments, and applied the skills independently when reading materials for pleasure. All the members of the Yearling Group were identified as appliers by virtue of the fact that they possessed the following characteristics. First, all of the Yearling Group members when individually asked to list reading skills did so. For example, Monica identified one reading skill as "getting the meaning of the story." She also referred to "finding similes and comparing things" as reading skills. Lezlie, on the other hand, talked about sequence and "saying things in your own words" as reading skills. The list of skills they provided included the names of skills which were incorporated into the MacMillan R Program as well as the skills that Mr. Bell said he taught. At no time during the course of the study did Mr. Bell identify any of the Yearling Group activities or assignments as skill activities. Yet, the appliers were able to identify and talk about their reading activities as skills. Next, all the Yearling Group members were capable of defining or explaining the content of each skill. Once a child listed a skill he/she was asked to explain what he/she meant by that appellation. Without exception, The Yearling Group members were capable of defining a skill and in most instances provided an example of the use of the skill to illustrate the definition. For example, Paul defined getting the main idea of a story as telling "mainly what happens in a chapter...or story." He used an example, "your eyes are like pearls" to define a simile. Karl gave an example to define what he meant by sequence. He listed the steps Jodi took to get help for Penny after the rattlesnake had bitten Penny. Third, each child exhibited his/her competence to use reading skills by completing assignments both in reading and in social studies. Finally, the children in the Yearling Group identified themselves as children who read a lot of materials on their own outside of school. The children said they read "to get information and for the fun-of-it." They also indicated that their parents encouraged them to read at home "before bedtime and during free time." A further discussion of the appliers and their perspective of reading is provided in a later chapter. At this point it is sufficient merely to identify the children in the Yearling Group as the appliers in Mr. Bell's classroom and to specify the characteristics of an applier.

Patty's Reading Group

A second reading group of interest in this study was Patty's Group. Mr. Bell identified each of the reading groups in his class, except the Yearling Group, by calling out the name of one member of the group. As regards Patty's particular group, Patty was the only member of the group; therefore, the group was known as Patty's Group. As will be seen in the following descriptions Patty's Group was considerably different from the Yearling Group in several respects.

Before providing the explicit details concerning Patty's Group, a brief historical description and analysis of Patty's placement in Mr. Bell's classroom is presented. An understanding of Patty's placement in Mr. Bell's classroom is essential in order to comprehend the complexity of the reading instruction in the classroom. Mr. Bell and the school principal Mrs. Leary had agreed that since Mr. Bell was working with children in a multi-graded classroom setting (fourth as well as fifth grade children) only children judged to be capable of functioning in a "multi-graded" environment were to be placed in his classroom. Children experiencing any form of learning or social adjustment problems were not to be placed in Mr. Bell's classroom. Patty's placement in Mr. Bell's class was a clear violation of this agreement. Mr. Bell indicated that, "She (Patty) should have gone to another fourth grade class because I was supposed to get all the children who were...close to each other academically...she was too low." Once Mr. Bell adjusted to the situation he, "readily accepted her (Patty) into my classroom."

The mysterious placement of Patty into Mr. Bell's class began during the first week of the new school year. On the first day of school, Patty was not enrolled at Westside School. She did not arrive at the school until the latter part of the first week. Since Mrs. Leary was out of the building when Patty and her mother arrived to register, Patty's initial placement in Mr. Bell's class was made by the school secretary. Patty was placed in Mr. Bell's class because at that time he had the least number of children in his class. That is, in terms of a total number of children when compared to the other classrooms at the fourth and fifth grade level Mr. Bell had the least number of children. Consequently, he was to receive the next child to arrive in the fourth grade. Mr. Bell related that neither Patty nor her mother was asked about the possibility of any learning problems. In addition, Patty's records of transfer from the school she previously attended were not available. Therefore, without regard for ability, the school secretary assigned Patty to Mr. Bell's classroom.

After only a few days in the class, Mr. Bell discovered that Patty was "obviously at the lower end in all subject areas when compared to the other children in the class." Mr. Bell brought the discrepancy of placement to the attention of Mrs. Leary. As a result, Mrs. Leary agreed to move Patty out of the classroom and into another fourth grade classroom. Mr. Bell then objected to that solution because the move "would be rather hard on her." Mr. Bell implied that the move would only upset the child and provide a new learning environment to which she would have to adjust. Therefore, Mr. Bell and Mrs. Leary agreed that Patty was to remain in Mr. Bell's classroom.

In retrospect, Mr. Bell stated that keeping Patty in the room "maybe it's done some good. Maybe somehow she's picking things up that maybe she wouldn't in another class." Mr Bell indicated that he didn't think Patty had become an "outcast" or "feels isolated" in the room and that "she and Christine have been hitting it off pretty well." He stated further that he's "sure everyone in the class knows that she's lower than they are, but I don't ...feel she feels badly about herself. She seems comfortable in the class."

At the beginning of the year, Patty took the MacMillan R Reading Program pre-assessments. Based on Patty's pre-assessment activities, Mr. Bell assigned her to a reading group with Matt. Initially, Patty and Matt worked from MacMillan text level nineteen. That was a low fourth grade level text. But, according to Mr. Bell, Patty could not do the reading. Consequently, he assigned her to MacMillan text level sixteen. The new placement was nearly two reading levels below her actual grade level. Even at the lower level Patty made very slow progress. According to Mr. Bell, however, Patty had made progress in word recognition skills and "I think her comprehension has gone up."

As stated earlier, Patty's Group operated altogether differently from the Yearling Group. Trying to characterize and ideal or typical example of Patty's group, however, is difficult at best. The reason for this is that Mr. Bell never seemed to follow the same procedure or routines from group session to group session with Patty. For example, sometimes, he asked her to write, using her own words, a title for the story she had read. Another time, he requested that she begin reading the story aloud to him. In the latter instance, Patty was not required to write a title at all. And, at other times, Mr. Bell merely began discussing the story with Patty. Almost every time Mr. Bell and Patty met for reading, however, a different approach was taken. In response to the lack of consistent procedures, Mr. Bell stated that for each story he had a different purpose in mind for Patty. For example, when he requested Patty to real aloud, he revealed that he was concentrating on her word recognition skill needs. Mr. Bell indicated that the stories Patty read aloud had difficult words, and he was observing her ability to decode the words. Mr. Bell maintained that, "She (Patty) has more word recognition problems than any of the other children." Another reason Mr. Bell asked Patty to read aloud was because "she's a low level reader and generally my feeling is that low level readers comprehend better when they read orally." Still another reason for asking Patty to read aloud, according to Mr. Bell, was because "Patty has some difficulty with vocabulary and it's somewhat of a check on her vocabulary." Although reading aloud appeared to occupy a significant amount of Patty's reading time at the front reading table with Mr. Bell, the fact was that in most instances reading aloud for Patty lasted only a very few minutes each group session.

During several of Patty's reading sessions, Mr. Bell organized the sessions around a series of questions. The questions were related to the content of the story that Patty had read. When this approach was employed, Mr. Bell asked Patty to state another title for the story using her own words. He requested that only after he cited the original title of the story for her. He usually allowed Patty ample opportunity to devise a new title. Once Patty responded, Mr. Bell asked, "Why did you name it that?" Mr. Bell also asked Patty questions about the characters from the story. The characters' names never seemed as important to Mr. Bell as did the details about the characters' habits and actions and their relationships to each other. In other words, through a discussion of the story's characters Mr. Bell expected Patty to explain the content of the story. On occasion when Patty incorrectly stated a detail or was unclear about a fact, Mr. Bell requested that she open the text and briefly read aloud from the passage to clarify the ideas.

The average amount of time Mr. Bell spent discussing the readings with Patty was five minutes and nineteen seconds. On the average, another one minute and forty-five seconds was spent reading some part of a story either to clarify an idea, search for an answer to a question, or provide Mr. Bell with a means of identifying her word identification problems. The average total time Patty spent working directly with each story was seven minutes and four seconds. This was considerably less time than the average of seventeen minutes and seven seconds the Yearling Group spent discussing the content of The Yearling. The average minutes each reading group spent discussing the readings with Mr. Bell during the reading group discussion sessions are shown in Table 2.

At the conclusion of the discussion activities with Patty's Group, Mr. Bell proceeded to assign Patty the MacMillan R Program workbook pages which accompanied the next story in her

Table 2

The Average Number of Minutes Reading Groups Spent Discussing the Story Contents During Discussion Group Sessions

Reading Group	Observations	Total Minutes	Average Minutes
Andrea's	7	31.13	5.12
Yearling	6	102.44	17.07
Patty's	5	26.35	5.19
Kevin's	5	16.45	3.21
Shawn's	3	9.14	3.04
Matt's	3	15.09	5.03
Holly's	3	14.26	4.49
Gini's	3	9.57	3.19
Scott's	3	6.01	2.00

reader. The procedure Mr. Bell followed in that endeavor was to read verbatim or to rephrase in his own words the directions for each page. Mr. Bell stated, "Sometimes I make all my own directions. For example, if the directions are long and complicated I generally go through the directions in my own wording. I have found that if I don't do that many times they (children) come up and ask me how to do this page. Then I've got to say to them well, why don't you read it out loud? Or, I have to read it again to them. So I've found that by reading the directions it saves time on my part." Once a workbook page was assigned, Mr. Bell asked Patty if she had any questions. Frequently, however, Mr. Bell did not wait for Patty to respond to his question concerning her understanding of the assigned page. Instead, he continued reading the directions for the next workbook page.

The workbook pages Mr. Bell assigned to Patty consisted of exercises for learning and applying reading skills that the authors of the MacMillan R Reading Program deemed essential for children to learn to read. Patty's workbook contained pages of practice exercises in vocabulary skills, word recognition skills, comprehension skills, and study skills. The greatest number of workbook exercises were in the areas of vocabulary skills and word recognition skills. Pages of exercises in vocabulary and word recognition skills accounted for eighty-two percent of the total number of pages in the workbook. Patty was required to apply her knowledge of comprehension skills on only fifteen percent of the total number of workbook pages. In most instances, the assignments required that Patty read a word, sentence or paragraph and either fill-in-the-blank with a correct response or circle an answer. Most of the skill exercises were not related to or derived from the story that was assigned in the basal reader. The exercises were isolated attempts at skill instruction or application.

During the course of the study, Mr Bell never referred to the workbook exercises as skills but instead labeled them as "activities." For Patty, the workbook pages were the only formal skill instruction that she received. In that regard, the directions for the workbook pages were read to her but seldom did Mr. Bell provide examples of the skill activities. Mr. Bell did attempt, however, to provide instruction on reading skills through the questions he asked during the discussion portion of the reading group meeting. But, his questions were related to the skills he deemed important for the children to learn. The skills Mr. Bell selected were not necessarily the skills provided in the MacMillan R Reading Program. Also, Mr. Bell's skill instructional procedures were very informal. He did not identify a particular skill as a skill. He presented one skill one day but often did not ask the children to use that skill again in the succeeding reading group sessions. For example, during the reading group discussions, Mr. Bell asked Patty questions with a focus almost entirely on literal events--facts and details--from the story. Patty was asked very few higher level comprehension questions, such as making comparisons, making inferences, or drawing conclusions from what was read. Patty did complete the workbook assignments. But, the entire process of assigning the pages, reading the directions, and completing the exercises day after day appeared to be a very mechanical process for both Mr. Bell and Patty.

After Mr. Bell finished assigning the workbook pages, he announced to Patty the date the pages were to be completed and returned to him. In most instances, Patty's workbook pages were due one day from the time they were assigned. Mr. Bell also announced to Patty the date that they would meet at the reading table to discuss the next story. The latter date was also the time that Patty was required to have completed the reading of the entire story. The next scheduled discussion meeting was usually arranged for two school days after the current group session. After providing all the directions to the assigned workbook pages and answering any questions Patty may have raised about the tasks she was to complete, Mr. Bell dismissed Patty from the reading table. She returned to her desk to begin working on her reading assignments.

Differences Between the Yearling Group and Patty's Group

There were several factors present in Mr. Bell's classroom which appeared to exert influences that created significant differences between the activities and behaviors of the Yearling Group and Patty's Group. Those factors need to be identified and discussed. First, there was a marked difference in the reading abilities of the members of the two groups. The difference in reading abilities may account, in fact, for a great number of the other differences which were evident. Next, each of the two groups spent a different amount of time discussing the content of their assigned stories. In fact, the Yearling Group spent nearly four times the number of minutes discussing the content of the assigned stories than did Patty. Similarly, the Yearling Group spent twice as many minutes in a reading discussion session than did Patty, as shown in Table 3. Several reasons for the rather large discrepancy in time provided for instruction was posited. First was Mr. Bell's expressed liking for the members of the Yearling Group. This is not to say or imply that he disliked Patty. Mr. Bell indicated frequently that he liked the children in the Yearling Group. He showed his liking as he worked in the reading group situation through his mannerisms and language usage and tone. Second, Mr. Bell disliked using the MacMillan R Reading Program. Explication of this fact is presented in the next chapter. Suffice to say that since he did not enjoy working with

Table 3

The Average Number of Minutes Reading Groups Spent in Discussion Group Sessions

Reading Group	Observations	Total Minutes	Average Minutes
Andrea's	7	78.03	11.09
Yearling	6	116.28	19.25
Patty's	5	58.19	11.40
Kevin's	5	47.12	9.26
Shawn's	3	22.50	7.37
Matt's	3	33.32	11.10
Holly's	3	23.24	7.48
Gini's	3	31.34	10.31
Scott's	3	26.17	8.46

the reading materials, he did not spend a great deal of time teaching from them. A third reason was the spontaneous responses the Yearling Group members made. Spontaneous responses did not occur in Patty's Group. Each answer Patty provided usually underwent several steps of explication. Whereas, answers of the members from the Yearling Group were usually completed on a first try. A fourth reason why Mr. Bell spent more total discussion time with the Yearling Group than with Patty's Group was because of the number of children in each group. The Yearling Group had six members while Patty's Group consisted of only one member. Therefore, an expectation and assumption was made that because of the greater number of group members the Yearling Group required more discussion time. This was not an appropriate assumption in this instance, however. Another reading group, Scott's Group, also consisted of six members. But, when the discussion times of the Yearling Group and Scott's Group are compared, the Yearling Group spent almost three times the amount of time Scott's Group spent in discussion. A final reason was the nature and function of the reading materials in the classroom. When reading programs are used, which contain workbooks and other published practice materials, teachers feel compelled to use and complete these materials. In order to fit the use of the materials into the alotted time for reading instruction however, some segments of the instructional procedures are forced to occupy less time.

Consequently, in Mr. Bell's case, the discussion of the story content with Patty was limited because he expended so much time reading directions and providing explanations concerning the skill exercises in the workbook. The average times spent receiving directions during reading group discussion sessions are reported in Table 4.

Another difference between the Yearling Group and Patty's Group was the number of interruptions which occurred during the reading group instruction with Mr. Bell. An interruption for the purposes of this study was defined as any break in work caused by an individual not present at the reading table. For example, when a student from the class arrived at the reading table to ask to go to the bathroom or to make some other request, this was judged to be an interruption of the reading group. Another example would be an interruption caused by the school office personnel calling on the loud speaker system to obtain the hot lunch count for Mr. Bell's classroom for the day. As regards these interruptions, Patty's Group sessions, over the course of the observational time, were interrupted more than twice as many times as the Yearling Group meetings. The average number of interruptions per reading group discussion session are reported in Table 5. No specific reason for the difference is available. All of the conditions--time of day, special classroom and school events, and the like--at the times the two groups met with Mr.

Table 4

The Average Number of Minutes Spent Receiving Directions Per Reading Group Discussion Session

Reading Group	Observations	Total Minutes	Average Minutes
Andrea's	7	23.08	3.19
Yearling	6	5.44	0.57
Patty's	5	20.19	4.04
Kevin's	5	15.10	3.02
Shawn's	3	1.49	0.36
Matt's	3	5.15	1.45
Holly's	3	5.23	1.48
Gini's	3	8.48	2.56
Scott's	3	4.45	1.35

Table 5

The Average Number of Interruptions Per Reading Group Discussion Session

Reading Group	Observations	Total Interruptions	Average Interruptions
Andrea's	7	31	4.43
Yearling	6	17	2.83
Patty's	5	32	6.40
Kevin's	5	20	4.00
Shawn's	3	11	3.67
Matt's	3	21	7.00
Holly's	3	11	3.67
Gini's	3	10	3.33
Scott's	3	15	5.00

Bell were similar. The only possible explanation was that the children in the classroom appeared to feel at ease when asking questions and were permitted to seek out Mr. Bell even if they were not a part of the instructional group with which he was working. The number and frequency of interruptions did cause the children working in the reading group to stop what they were doing and to listen to Mr. Bell while he answered a question or provided some direction to a child, however. In most instances, when a child came to the front reading table to ask a question, the child did not wait for a break in the conversation between Mr. Bell and the reading group members before interrupting. On the contrary, the child usually asked his/her question, causing any other speaker, on most occasions, to stop talking and to listen to the question and Mr. Bell's answer. Resumption of the reading group activities was often delayed as both the teacher and the children had to recoup their thoughts and attempt to resume their discussion. On several occasions, when Patty's Group was interrupted in the middle of a thought on a specific topic, she found it difficult to resume the discussion. In fact, when the discussion did resume the topic often changed even though the previous thoughts were not explored completely. This concept of interruptions is presented from the perspective of the teacher and the children in later chapters.

The Non-Appliers of the Skill of Reading

Patty was a non-applier of reading skills. A non-applier was identified by three characteristics. First, a non-applier was an individual who was unable to identify or name any specific reading skill. An example of a specific reading skill was any skill contained in the MacMillan R Reading Program such as determining sequence, drawing conclusions, identifying variant sounds of consonants, pronouncing consonant blends, and the like. In addition, a specific reading skill was any skill that Mr. Bell taught during the reading group discussions such as getting the main idea, drawing inferences, evaluating characters and the like. A second characteristic of a non-applier was inability to define or describe a reading skill. To define a specific reading skill an individual used an example, recited a definition he/she had learned or provided a definition using his/her own words. The third characteristic of a non-applier was the inability to apply the specific reading skill or skills not only to reading assignments but also to assignments in content areas such as social studies. Patty was not the only individual in Mr. Bell's classroom possessing these characteristics. She was representative of all the non-appliers in the classroom, however.

Patty was designated a non-applier because she possessed each of the following attributes. First, when Patty was asked to name or list a specific reading skill she was unable to do so.

Even though the question was asked directly after she received instruction in the use of skills in the MacMillan R Reading Program from Mr. Bell, she was unable to name a skill. Second, Patty was incapable of providing a definition of a specific skill. In fact, she was unable to describe a reading skill even after the skill was identified for her. Third, Patty did not use the reading skills she was exposed to in her reading group. That is, she exhibited limited reading ability in her reading group. Patty had some specific word recognition difficulties. Also, her ability to comprehend was limited to understanding the literal meaning of the printed word. Consequently, Patty exhibited limited ability to participate in a discussion of the content of a story. As regards her reading group, she had difficulty answering the questions Mr. Bell asked. In addition, Patty did not participate in the social studies content area discussions. When asked why she did not participate in the social studies discussions, Patty stated that she did not understand the content of the assigned social studies materials. A further discussion of the non-appliers in Mr. Bell's classroom and their perspective of reading is provided in a later chapter.

Andrea's Reading Group

The third reading group to be described and analyzed in this study is Andrea's Group. Andrea and Missy were the only members of the group. Since Mr. Bell continually addressed the group as "Andrea's Group" that is how it is identified throughout this paper. In terms of reading level of the MacMillan R Reading Program, Andrea's Group was reading at a beginning fifth grade level, level twenty-six, Birds and Beasts. The activities and behaviors of the group during reading instruction with Mr. Bell was very similar to the activities of Patty's Group. Some variations did exist, however.

Mr. Bell called Andrea's Group to the front reading table. After arriving at the table, the first thing Mr. Bell asked Andrea and Missy to do was to write a title for the story they had read. He stated, "Write a title you would choose to give the story if you were the author." Once sufficient time was alloted to accomplish the task, Mr. Bell asked each child, "What title did you give the selection?" Invariably, a discussion of the title choices developed into an in-depth discussion of the entire story. The children did not discuss the titles among themselves but only with Mr. Bell. Mr. Bell's purpose in requesting the children to rewrite the story title in their own words was to observe their ability to decipher and reconstruct the main idea of the story. He explained, "Generally when you rewrite a title my feeling is it's the main idea...they understand what was going on in the story." Consequently, Mr. Bell used considerable time and energy in the reading group session to have Andrea's

Group explore and describe the main ideas of the stories they had read.

Once the title was rewritten and the ensuing discussion about the title completed, the discussion usually shifted to questions concerning the setting of the story, the main characters, and the author's purpose for writing the story. For example, many of the questions Mr. Bell asked during the reading discussion sessions required the children to relate how they felt about a particular character in the story. The questions did not evolve into simple literal answers obtainable merely by reading the story. On the contrary, the children were required to make inferences, comparisons, and judgments about the qualities each story character possessed. In order to answer Mr. Bell's questions about the characters, the reading group participants incorporated the information they gained from reading the story with the background information they had obtained from their real-life experiences. To all of this, the participants in the reading group included the inner feelings they generated about the characters. Frequently, Mr. Bell expected Andrea and Missy to put themselves in the place of the main character and explain how each individual felt or what each child did in the story. No matter what answers the children provided, Mr. Bell required both Andrea and Missy to provide some form of substantiation for any answer which became part of the reading group discussion.

Another type of question Mr. Bell usually asked Andrea's Group was, "What was the author's purpose in writing this story, do you think?" Once one child answered the question, Mr. Bell invited another group participant either to defend the first child's answer or to provide a more elaborate description as pertained to the original answer. Sometimes a group member provided a contradictory answer. These were the only situations in which any form of exchange between the reading group members occurred. The discussions that occurred usually transpired between Mr. Bell and one child in the reading group at a time. Mr. Bell did not appear to encourage or even establish an environment for the children in the reading group to discuss, agree, or argue with each other during the reading group discussions.

One factor not evident during Andrea's Group reading discussion with Mr. Bell was the occurrence of reading aloud. During the entire observational period of this study, Andrea's Group did not read aloud to Mr. Bell. In response to that Mr. Bell merely indicated that Andrea's Group was not in need of that type of instruction.

The average group discussion times for Andrea's Group was representative of all the other reading groups in Mr. Bell's classroom. All reading discussion groups working at the fifth and sixth grade levels of the MacMillan R Reading Program discussed their stories on the average of five minutes and two seconds per group session. Andrea's Group spent, on the average, five minutes and eleven seconds discussing the content of their stories with Mr. Bell. That average was very similar to the average amount of time Mr. Bell spent discussing the content of the stories Patty's Group read. A large discrepancy remains, however, between the average time for discussion expended in the Yearling Group sessions and the average amount of time Andrea's Group spent discussing the stories. The discrepancy in terms of minutes spent discussing the content of the stories was on the magnitude of a four to one ratio in favor of the Yearling Group.

The next task for Andrea's Group was the workbook exercises. Once the discussion session ended, Mr. Bell asked Andrea and Missy to open their workbooks to the next vocabulary pretest page. The typical vocabulary pretest in the MacMillan R Reading Program workbooks consisted of a series of sentences with an underlined word in the sentence. Beneath or at the conclusion of each sentence a choice of three words was provided. The word underlined in the sentence was a word which the children would meet in the next story they read. The textbook authors presented that word as a word the children had not encountered before in their reading of any of the stories in the various levels of the MacMillan Program. The words presented as answer choices were thought to be words which were familiar to the children. That is, the words were frequently read while reading the stories in the basal reader texts. A child completing the exercise selected one of the three words which meant the same as the underlined word in the sentence. Andrea and Missy always completed a vocabulary pretest before they read the next story in the basal reader. Frequently, the children began working on the pretest page without being given any directions by Mr. Bell. They worked silently and by themselves. Mr. Bell allowed the children sufficient time to answer all the pretest items. Andrea's Group took, on the average, two minutes and twelve seconds to complete a pretest exercise. Then, the group members, under the guidance of Mr. Bell, read aloud each question and answer to the pretest. Mr. Bell selected who was to read each item. In most instances, he alternated his choice between the two children for reading the pretest items. If a child discovered she had made an error on the pretest by selecting an inappropriate answer she was to correct her mistake. Beyond having the children read the correct response to each pretest item, Mr. Bell said nothing about the vocabulary words on the pretest. Also, Mr. Bell did not assign a grade or even check how well the children had done on the pretest.

After Andrea's Group completed the vocabulary pretest exercise, Mr. Bell began to read the directions or in some instances even provided his own directions to the workbook pages that the members of Andrea's Group were to complete. The workbook pages accompanied the basal text story Andrea's Group would read. The assigned workbook pages had very little direct relationship to the story, however. That is, the children completed the workbook pages without reading the story. When reading the directions, Mr. Bell provided very few examples illustrating the skill or skills to be taught or used in the exercise. As with Patty's Group, Mr. Bell sometimes stated his own directions because the directions provided in the workbook were "too long and complicated." Mr. Bell expressed the feeling that the author's directions only confused the children.

Although Mr. Bell did provide Andrea's Group with directions for completing the workbook pages and did require the group members to complete most if not all the pages in the workbook, little time was spent instructing the children on the content of the skills, how to use the skills,and in the practice and direct application of the skills. Children working on one skill appeared to be a one shot experience. Instruction in how to use a skill which was present in a workbook exercise page occurred through the teacher's reading of a set of directions. Practice of the skill did not occur beyond the workbook exercise. The use of the workbook pages appeared to be very mechanical with no purpose or goal other than to be able to say that the workbook pages for a particular basal reader level text were completed by the children.

The content of the workbook for Andrea's Group was composed of the following types of exercises. First, there were vocabulary pretests which constituted twenty-one percent of the content of the workbook pages. Next, exercises requiring children to learn and practice word attack or word recognition skills comprised twenty-eight percent of the workbook pages. Seventeen percent of the workbook exercises were concerned with comprehension skills. Finally, more than thirty-four percent of the workbook pages consisted of study skills exercises.

When comparing the workbook contents of Andrea's Group with Patty's Group, two significant differences in the content were evident. First, the workbook Andrea's Group used contained a larger percentage of pages for the learning and practice of study skills. Some examples of the study skills exercises were: using the card catalog; reading maps; using a table of contents; using the newspaper; and reading diagrams. Second, the workbook pages for Andrea's Group contained more comprehension exercises such as identifying cause and effect, following sequence, drawing conclusions, and the like and fewer vocabulary exercises. One reason for that was the MacMillan R Reading Program authors maintained that a higher concentration of comprehension and study skill activities were essential for the children to learn as the higher levels of reading were approached (Smith & Wardhaugh, 1975). Andrea's Group was reading nine basal reader text levels above Patty's Group. Consequently, Andrea's Group was exposed to a higher concentration of comprehension skills and study skills than was Patty's Group.

After all the workbook pages were assigned to Andrea's Group, Mr. Bell then assigned a date for the workbook pages to be completed. As with Patty's Group, the workbook pages were to be completed and submitted to Mr. Bell by the end of the next school day. Then, the pages were corrected by Mr. Bell and placed in the children's "cubby-hole." At no time during the entire observational period were the workbook pages of any child reviewed in a reading group session.

Along with the assigning of a due date for the workbook pages, Mr. Bell also designated a date when the group would meet to discuss the story they were to read. The title of the next story the children were to read was seldom named. The children in Andrea's Group, for instance, knew the location of the next story in their basal reader text. Mr. Bell merely told the children, "read the next story." The second date Mr. Bell designated was usually two days after the previous reading group meeting for Andrea's Group. That is, the children had two days to read the story and be prepared to discuss the story with Mr. Bell at the reading table.

Before dismissing Andrea's Group, Mr. Bell sometimes assigned the children of the group an extra assignment. At the beginning of this chapter, the concept of an extra assignment was explained in full, and that explanation need not be reiterated here. During the observational period, Andrea's Group received only one extra assignment. The assignment consisted of completing the illustrations of the story "Five Degrees From Polaris." Mr. Bell gave directions to the children, "What I want you to do with the story is to select a sentence on the page that would fit the illustration." That assignment was also due "on the same day as your workbooks are due." Most of the reading groups in Mr. Bell's classroom were assigned extra assignments to complete. Patty's Group was an exception. At no time, in fact, was Patty's Group given an extra assignment. Mr. Bell's reason for that was that Patty experienced enough difficulty and took so much time completing the reading and workbook assignments she received.

Once the reading assignments were provided, the children in Andrea's Group were dismissed from the reading table and returned to their own desks. Reading instruction for Andrea's Group was completed. The children then used the time allocated for classroom reading to do whatever reading activities they desired. There was no pressure to begin the next reading assignment immediately, but in most instances, the children did begin to work on the next assignment. Sometimes however,Andrea and Missy chose to go to the library to seek out a book for the biweekly book report. At other times, they went to the library just "to browse among the shelves."

The Tacit Appliers of the Skill of Reading

The children in Andrea's Group, Andrea and Missy, were tacit appliers of reading skills in Mr. Bell's classroom. A tacit applier was an individual possessing the following characteristics. First, a tacit applier was unable to name a reading skill on his/her own. When the name of a reading skill was provided to the individual however, he/she indicated that he/she had heard the name of the skill before. Another characteristic was that even though the individual had heard of the skill he/she was incapable of describing the skill or ascribing meaning to the skill beyond the recognition of the skill's name. A final characteristic of the tacit applier was the most perplexing characteristic of all. A tacit applier was capable of using and applying the skills of reading with consistent regularity so as to complete reading and content area assignments. The evidence that a tacit applier was in fact using and applying reading skills was plentiful. First, he/she was reading at or above grade level in the MacMillan R Reading Program. That is, each tacit applier was reading in a basal text at a level equal to or greater than his/her actual grade level. A tacit applier passed the workbook skill pre-assessments appropriate for his/her actual grade level and continued to work in text materials at or above his/her actual grade level. Second, he/she progressed at an even pace through the basal reader levels. A tacit applier was acknowledged to be making progress when he/she had successfully completed more than three text levels within the MacMillan R reading Program while in Mr. Bell's classroom. Third, during the reading group sessions, a tacit applier answered questions which probed beyond the literal comprehension level. That is, the tacit applier was capable of making inferences from the content of a story, providing evaluations about the story, and exhibiting an appreciation and understanding of the characters in the story and the author's effort in writing the story. Finally, a tacit applier was an individual who completed his/her reading assignments in the social studies content area and participated in the social studies group discussions.

Andrea and Missy were not the only tacit appliers in Mr. Bell's classroom. A total of seventeen children possessed similar characteristics and were judged to be tacit appliers. The seventeen tacit appliers accounted for sixty-five percent of the children in Mr. Bell's classroom. The tacit appliers were by far the largest percentage of children in the classroom. Twenty-three percent of six children were judged to be appliers of reading skills. An additional twelve percent of three children were recognized as non-appliers of reading skills.

The above presentation concludes the description and analysis of the behaviors and activities of the three categories of readers in Mr. Bell's classroom. An attempt was made to describe each type of reader by focusing attention on the behaviors and activities of three representative reading groups from the classroom. With the selection of only three groups some very significant understandings of the reading process which occurred in Mr. Bell's classroom may be lost. In the next two chapters of this study, an attempt is made to account for the possible loss of understanding by describing and analyzing the reading process first from the perspective of the classroom teacher, Mr. Bell, and second from the perspective of the children in the classroom.

CHAPTER V

THE TEACHER'S EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

The following is a presentation of some important factors of one teacher's perspective of his work as a classroom teacher. Specifically, the concern in this chapter is with a teacher's perspective, Mr. Bell's, as regards the teaching of reading to a classroom of twenty-six children. Before commencing this effort, however, definitions and explications of two concepts, a teacher's cultural knowledge of teaching and a teacher's perspective, are necessary.

A Teacher's Cultural Knowledge of Teaching

Mr. Bell's cultural knowledge of teaching is referred to at various points in this chapter. A cultural knowledge of teaching is defined here as a set of systematically related beliefs, ideas, and actions that an individual possesses, knows, and employs. These essential characteristics constitute an individual's basis for viewing teaching within a particular cultural setting. The related beliefs, ideas, and actions may be explicitly deomonstrated or tacitly understood. As defined, a cultural knowledge of teaching involves both cognitive and evaluative aspects of teaching. Also, general ideas and assumptions about the nature of knowledge and of human nature, motivation and learning, are included in this concept. Moreover, an individual's cultural knowledge of teaching includes an understanding of the essence of a teacher's task, both technical and social demands. That is, knowledge of the specific skills and techniques and knowledge about the formation of social systems are required of a teacher in order to function in a school classroom. Furthermore, a cultural knowledge of teaching includes a characterization of classroom organizations and environments and the role and function of general education within these organizations and environments as well as within the wider social context of the school and community. Finally, an individual's cultural knowledge of teaching encompasses criteria used for the purpose of assessing the performance of both children and teachers in an educational setting. Included in the criterion is a standard for evaluating other individuals participating in the process of educating children. That is, a teacher establishes a standard he/she may use to evaluate another teacher, a school principal or a superintendent of schools. In summary, an individual teacher's cultural knowledge of teaching includes a broad conception of education, knowledge of the task of teaching, and a set of prescriptions for performing the task within a specific cultural setting.

The content of a cultural knowledge of teaching is a function of a network of interrelated factors. For example, a teacher's cognitive orientation and his/her ideological commitments are but two factors which comprise this content. In addition, the ideas an individual generates as regards teaching and the variety of experiences a teacher encounters when faced with the daily demands of doing the job are two more factors which make up the content of a cultural knowledge of teaching. Moreover, one must not neglect the reality that an individual's knowledge of teaching is also derived from the experiences he/she encounters during his/her socialization into the general cultural setting.

This presentation is not an attempt, however, to grasp the complexity and subtlety of all teachers' cultural knowledge of teaching within a society. An undertaking of that magnitude is well nigh impossible to attain and/or describe. On the contrary, the major objective of this chapter is to focus on the beliefs, ideas and actions, the cultural knowledge of teaching, which emerges as one teacher, Mr. Bell, confronts specific situations and problems in his classroom and/or in the school.

The Teacher's Perspective

A teacher's perspective is a set of personally co-ordinated explicit and tacit beliefs, ideas, and actions which he/she employs while interacting with children in problematic situations associated with teaching and learning. This perspective, however, is based upon the individual's cultural knowledge. Some of the elements included in a consideration of a classroom teacher's perspective are: 1) the teacher's concept of the community, school, and classroom environments and the problems each of these environments creates; 2) a definition of specific educational goals and objectives; 3) the teacher's "rationalization for being and acting" in a classroom; 4) the teacher's designation of the kinds of activities to be generated for the teaching of specific content and skills; 5) the teacher's establishment of a set of criteria to evaluate not only the actions of the children in his/her classroom but also criteria to evaluate his/her own actions; and 6) the teacher's establishment of a "set of congruent activities and actions" which he/she employs so as to attend to social situations as they may arise (Sharp & Green, 1975, p. 70).

In formal terms, a teacher's perspective is comprised of his/her total knowledge of the setting and of the inhabitants living within the bounds of that setting. Incorporated in the major objective of this chapter is the necessity to examine specifically aspects of Mr. Bell's perspective which are directly related to his knowledge and teaching of reading skills and the application of those reading skills by children in his classroom in the social studies content area. In another chapter of this paper, the general reading behaviors and activities of the children in Mr. Bell's classroom are categorized, described and analyzed in detail. Included in those particular descriptions are some elements of Mr. Bell's cultural knowledge and perspective of reading instruction. This occurred because as the descriptions were provided the investigator was unable to spearate out or isolate Mr. Bell's perspective from the content and the instruction. Now, however, an attempt is made to present Mr. Bell's perspective as a teacher at Westside School. More specifically the descriptions to be presented focus on Mr. Bell's perspective of reading instruction at the school and in his classroom.

The elements of concern in this indepth description and analysis of specific aspects of Mr. Bell's perspective of teaching are: 1) his social and academic background; 2) his social-professional position within the context of Westside School; 3) his descriptions and characterizations of the content and process of reading instruction in the school and his very own classroom; 4) his representation of the formation, organization, and use of reading groups and other classroom grouping arrangements; and 5) his implementation and use of reading skills in the social studies content area.

Mr. Bell's Background

Two of the elements which contribute to the formation of an individual's perspective are his/her social and academic backgrounds. Mr. Bell's backgrounds play important roles in the formation of his perspective. Mr. Bell related that he was raised in a "middle class" family in a Midwestern state. After graduating from high school, he enlisted in the United States Army. He remained in the Army until such time that he attained the rank of sergeant. Mr. Bell was honorably discharged from the Army in California. The amount of time between his high school graduation and the time of his Army discharge was approximately two years. Consequently, Mr. Bell's college education came a bit later than most individuals of his age. Once he was discharged, Mr. Bell remained in California and enrolled in a five year degree program in elementary education at one of the California state universities.

During the period of time of Mr. Bell's undergraduate educational experience in California, he was required to enroll in and successfully complete two university reading methods courses. These two courses were required of each teaching candidate who wanted to obtain California teacher certification. Regardless of the intent of the courses, Mr. Bell says currently that he is unable to describe even minimally the specific content of either reading course. Yet, as is indicated later in this chapter, Mr. Bell's teaching peers at Westside School recommended that he be assigned to the reading resource position at Westside School because of his experience in the two reading courses.

Along with the classroom work, Mr. Bell was required to enroll in a full year, two semesters, of student teaching in a California public school environment. His first student teaching experience consisted of working in a classroom with children of "mixed grade levels," third, fourth and fifth grades. In this situation Mr. Bell worked closely with his co-operating teacher, often assisting the teacher by instructing the children in some of the subjects included in this elementary school's curriculum. Mr. Bell's second semester of student teaching experience consisted of teaching first grade children in a "minority school." He explained that a minority school in California is one in which half or more than half of the student population is composed of children speaking Spanish as their primary language and English as their second language. Mr. Bell's placement in a minority school was not an unusual situation since he related that there is a California law which stipulates that all student teachers in elementary education who seek certification credentials must serve as student teachers in a minority school. Mr. Bell speculated that this particular law was enacted by representatives in the California legislature because the population of California is composed of so many Spanish speaking immigrants that prospective teachers must be exposed to the culture, language, and customs of this large segment of California's population. Again, in this second student teaching experience, Mr. Bell worked closely with and assisted the classroom teacher in teaching the school's curriculum.

Teaching at Westside School

Upon graduation from the California State University, Mr. Bell returned to his family's home in the Midwest. Once at home, Mr. Bell found his first teaching employment as a substitute teacher for one semester. He assumed the classroom responsibilities of a teacher who took a leave of absence because of illness. At the conclusion of the substitute teaching assignment, Mr. Bell applied for and was appointed to his first full-time teaching assignment at Westside Elementary School in Capital City.

During Mr. Bell's tenure of employment at Westside School, he taught a fifth grade self-contained classroom for three years. Presently, he is teaching a class of fourth/fifth graders, also a self-contained classroom situation. At Westside School, a self-contained classroom is defined as a classroom in which a teacher teaches all of the curriculum subjects to the same group of children each day. That is, the children remain in the classroom with the same teacher each day all day. The exception to this is that specially trained teachers in the areas of music, art, and physical education are employed to teach in these special areas. Consequently, the classroom teachers are relieved of these curricular responsibilities. As observed, Mr. Bell used much of the time his class spent with the specialists correcting papers the children had submitted to him. He also used some of the time to write lesson plans for the next school day. Usually, Mr. Bell spent this so-called "free time" attending to teaching duties associated with his classroom responsibilities. Mr. Bell spent little of his free time out of his classroom. During the observational period, Mr. Bell spent almost no time in the teacher's lounge during the free time periods.

Although Mr. Bell has remained at Westside School for four years, his employment there has been somewhat troubling to him. Since the beginning, Mr. Bell has received good teaching evaluations from his immediate supervisor, Mrs. Leary, the school principal. In fact, she considers Mr. Bell to be a very "competent teacher." Mrs. Leary states, "He's flexible, he's creative, he knows his curriculum, he's a very child-centered teacher. He meets all the needs of the children in that room." Regardless of the good evaluations, Mr. Bell was declared a "surplus teacher" by Capital City's school administrators at the end of his first year. When Mr. Bell talks about this incident he indicates that his services were terminated. Capital City's school administrators, however, define a surplus teacher as a person who has a contract for the next school year, but the teacher will more than likely be reassigned to another school within the Capital City school system. Allegedly, Mr. Bell was declared a surplus teacher because the number of children enrolling at Westside School was steadily declining. Consequently, there were too many teachers employed at the school for the number of children enrolled. Westside School was not the only school in Capital City experiencing enrollment problems. Like the occupants of many other Capital City neighborhoods many of Westside's residents left the city and moved into the nearby towns and villages. With the decrease in population and the diminishing numbers of children being born in Capital City during the past ten years, the enrollments in many of the City's schools were declining continually. Since Mr. Bell was the last teacher hired at Westside School, he was the first teacher at the school to be declared a surplus. His stretch of unemployment lasted only during the summer months, however, as he was reappointed to the Westside School faculty before the beginning of the next school year. According to Principal Leary, Mr. Bell's dismissal was "merely a formality." She expected Mr. Bell would be given a position somewhere in Capital City's school system. She, however, supported Mr. Bell's reappointed to the Westside School faculty.

Again, in Mr. Bell's fourth year of teaching at Westside School, his status within the Capital City school system is not secure. Adult residents and their school-age children continue to leave Capital City thereby depleting the enrollment population of several city schools. An estimated thirty-seven teaching positions are to be eliminated before the beginning of the new school year (Midwest Journal, January 5, 1980). Mrs. Leary estimates that several changes will occur at Westside School. One of the changes undoubtedly will be Mr. Bell's assignment to a new school within Capital City.

Mr. Bell did not seem outwardly bitter about his situation of uncertainty. He admitted, however, that he was uncomfortable with the surplus teacher decision four years ago. In this regard, Mr. Bell expressed concern about the seniority system of the City's educational organization. Although he is a participating member of Capital City's teachers' union, Mr. Bell has difficulty understanding and supporting the union policy concerning seniority. The union's elected officers define the seniority policy in such a way that regardless of the quality of effort on the part of the classroom teachers, the teachers with the longest records of service in Capital City's schools retain their employment positions. Mr. Bell does support the teachers' union even though this particular policy continues to adversely affect his position. Mr. Bell's support of the union, however, does not curtail his talking about and questioning the positions the union leaders have adopted. Mr. Bell frequently generalizes about the teachers in the Capital City school system whom he considers to be "incompetent...," but who continue to keep their teaching positions because of the union policy. Mr. Bell's view of these particular teachers is very negative.

During early morning conversations, Mr. Bell repeatedly alluded to the fact that he would not be returning to Westside School the next school year. Yet, he did not appear to be disturbed or upset with that prospect. His apparent calm as concerned the possibility of leaving Westside School was bolstered by several factors. The most important factor seemed to be Mr. Bell's confidence that "the superintendent would find something for me." The origin of that particular confidence was never determined during the study. That confidence, however, was expressed not only by Mr. Bell but also by Mrs. Leary. Mrs. Leary maintained that there would be a place for Mr. Bell in Capital City's schools. Mr. Bell's and Mrs. Leary's confidences were borne out near the end of the observational period when Mr. Bell received notification that he would be assigned to a new elementary school for the coming school year. On the morning he received the news, Mr. Bell was extremely elated and did not hesitate to share his delight with his colleagues. Prior to the beginning of the school day, several classroom teachers stopped by Mr. Bell's classroom to congratulate him on his new appointment.

Another factor which apparently contributed to Mr. Bell's calm was his desire to have the opportunity to work at a different school. Mr. Bell frequently talked about working in schools and classroom situations with different types of organizational arrangements. He appeared to look forward to the opportunity to apply his skills as a teacher in different surroundings and environments.

The only disappointment Mr. Bell mentioned as he digested and discussed the news of his change in venue from Westside School was that he would no longer be able to walk to school each day. Westside School was within easy walking distance from his home, but his new school could only be reached by car or bus. Aside from this latter concern, Mr. Bell seemed relieved that a decision about his future finally had been made, and he would be leaving Westside School.

No direct change in Mr. Bell's teaching and/or behavior toward the children in his classroom was observed once the news of his transfer in teaching assignment had been received. The failure to observe changes can be attributed to two factors. First, the news of Mr. Bell's transfer was obtained so late in the school year, a little more than three weeks before the beginning of the summer vacation period, that insufficient time was available either to obtain an obervable measure of change or for a change to take effect. Second, the children in the classroom were unaware of the fact that Mr. Bell would be leaving Westside School before the next school year. Mr. Bell did not share this news with the children. When asked to explain why he did not tell his class Mr. Bell stated, "It may affect some of the fourth graders who want to have me as their teacher next year." In essence, Mr. Bell did not want to disappoint the fourth grade children in his class. Therefore, he thought it best not to reveal his plans to any of the children.

Reading Resource Position

In addition to serving as a classroom teacher, Mr. Bell also serves in the capacity of the reading resource person at Westside School. He has held this position for two years. During the first year, he shared the duties of reading resource person with the Learning Disabilities teacher, Ms. O'Day. This year, however, he assumed full responsibility for the reading resource position as Ms. O'Day no longer chose to serve the school in that capacity.

According to Mr. Bell, the duties of a reading resource person are to "test children the teachers in the school think are having some problems in reading and try and diagnose what the problems are and tell the teachers. They (the teachers) can devise their own program if they wish. I don't devise a program for the teachers." In addition, Mr. Bell mentioned that the reading resource person also serves as the representative of Westside School to the meetings of all the reading teachers from Capital City's schools. The system-wide meetings have been infrequent, however. Consequently, Mr. Bell's prime duties as reading resource person have consisted of testing the children the classroom teachers recommend.

Mr. Bell is provided one afternoon per week, Thursdays, of realeased time from his classroom teaching responsibilities to perform the duties of the reading resource person. While Mr. Bell works as the reading resource person, a substitute teacher is hired to assume Mr. Bell's self-contained classroom teaching responsibilities. According to Mrs. Leary, Mr. Bell was appointed to the reading resource position for two reasons. First, "they (the other Westside teachers) knew that (he) had had recent reading courses in California...." This fact was mentioned previously, but Mr. Bell claims to be unable to remember the specific content of the undergraduate reading courses he attended. His teaching peers at Westside School, however, assigned to him additional responsibilities and position within the school based on his academic preparation. A second reason Mr. Bell was assigned the reading resource position is that "the one teacher (who) is still here didn't want it anymore." This statement refers to the fact that Ms. O'Day no longer wanted to serve as the reading resource person at Westside School. Therefore, her reading resource duties reverted to Mr. Bell.

Mr. Bell readily acknowledges that he is not an expert in diagnosing and prescribing treatments for reading problems faced by individual children. But, he justifies his position as reading resource person based on his feelings of competency in being able to administer reading tests. He indicates that he learned to administer reading tests while taking the reading courses as an undergraduate. In addition, he acquired some practice administering reading tests during his student teacher training program. Another justification Mr. Bell proposes for his reading resource position is the notion that the other teachers at Westside School do not want to be bothered with the task of testing the children. Yet, he expresses the idea that in order to help children, teachers need to identify the abilities and needs of the children and to work on the needs to increase individual reading abilities.

Mr. Bell views the reading resource position at Westside School as an opportunity to get involved in another aspect of teaching--working closely with different children and teachers in the school. Much of the time that is provided to the reading resource teacher becomes "free-time," however, since the classroom teachers at Westside School have failed to recommend a sufficient number of children who need to be tested in reading. The time that is provided Mr. Bell is to be used for the purpose of testing the children and writing the diagnostic reports on the children he has tested. Yet, Mr. Bell spends much of his free-time planning his own classroom lessons or searching for or developing teaching materials for his own class. During the course of the study, four months, only four children were tested by Mr. Bell. Those were the only children recommended by the other classroom teachers for testing. Mr. Bell had completed administering the reading tests but was still in the process of writing the diagnostic reports based on the results achieved by the children.

Mr. Bell's View of Westside School

Mr. Bell appeared to enjoy his class of children at Westside School. He expected the children to complete their assigned work, but he often joked with the children. Mr. Bell maintained that "I think it's good for them to see I have a sense of humor." He added,"...ninety-five percent of the kids have a good sense of humor. They roll with me." At the same time, the children appeared to enjoy being in Mr. Bell's classroom. For example, Matt expressed the feelings the class had about Mr. Bell best when he said, "I think Mr. Bell is a nice teacher, and I really like him. He's the best teacher I ever had because he's strict, but he's funny." Mr. Bell said that he liked to be with the children in his classroom.

There were a few details about Westside School which concerned Mr. Bell, however. One concern of Mr. Bell's was the declining enrollments at Westside School. Mr. Bell talked openly about the declining enrollments and indicated that the parents of children from another nearby neighborhood school, which was being closed, were a partial cause of the enrollment problem. Mrs. Leary had expressed the hope that the parents of that neighborhood school would send their children to Westside School and thereby force Capital City's school administrators to maintain Westside School at its present level of operation. The increase in enrollment would have eliminated the need for any changes in the number of personnel at the school. According to Mrs. Leary, the majority of parents elected to send their children elsewhere. Consequently changes were to occur at the school.

One change that would occur was Mr. Bell's transfer to another elementary school in Capital City. The circumstances surrounding Mr. Bell's leaving Westside School have been described in a previous section of this chapter. The decline in the Westside School population not only affected Mr. Bell's teaching position but also had a direct affect on his wife who taught at Westside School too. Like Mr. Bell, she was also scheduled to be transferred to another elementary school by the beginning of the next school year. The prospect that the two individuals would be entering two different schools the next school year was disconcerting to both of them. Mr. Bell expressed hope, however, that he and his wife would be teaching in the same school so as to eliminate some of the personal expenses which would be incurred if they were forced to teach in different schools. Mr. Bell expressed sadness at the prospect of leaving the children of the

Westside School. He indicated that he had enjoyed working with the children and would like to remain with them.

Another factor of concern for Mr. Bell was his view that Westside School was a "traditional" school. What he meant was that, in his view, the teachers at Westside School did not often initiate changes in their approach to teaching. Specifically, Mr. Bell was referring to two teaching approaches that were of interest to him. The two approaches of interest to Mr. Bell were team-teaching for planning and teaching reading and using reading tests to determine the individual skill needs of the children at the beginning of the school year. Mr. Bell explained that the other teachers at Westside School lacked enthusiasm for these two approaches.

Mr. Bell described a team-teaching approach as two or more teachers exchanging children of similar abilities for the purposes of instruction. One teacher would teach the children of one ability level and the other teacher would instruct the children of another ability level. Although Mr. Bell and another teacher, Mrs. King, often planned and arranged science activities together for their classes, Mr. Bell did not consider that team-teaching. First children possessing similar abilities were not exchanged. Second, there was no effort on the teacher's parts to reduce the overall range of abilities the teachers would work with in either classroom. Mr. Bell stated that the other teachers were not in favor of team-teaching because "swapping children for reading instruction stigmatizes a child, particularly the low reader...." Mr. Bell maintained, however, "that time-wise it would be better for a teacher" since a teacher would only have to work with one or two ability levels of children. Therefore, a teacher could concentrate his/her energies on meeting the specific needs of the children in two groups instead of trying to deal with the diverse needs of an entire class. Also in this regard, Mr. Bell indicated that lesson plan preparation for reading would be reduced. Neither of these arguments was very convincing to the other faculty members at Westside School. Consequently, Mr. Bell was unable to try a team-teaching approach.

Mr. Bell's other interest centered on the testing of the children in reading at the beginning of a school year. The other classroom teachers at Westside School were not in favor of this approach. Mr. Bell reasoned that in order to provide appropriate reading instruction, to attempt to meet the reading needs of individual children, he needed to test the children at the beginning of the school year. Then, he would adjust the placement of each child in the reading groups based on the test results and not rely solely on the recommendations of a previous year's teacher. The other Westside teachers did not appear to accept Mr. Bell's purpose for the testing and felt he was questioning their abilities as teachers. Mr. Bell stated that "some teachers are unwilling to accept the fact that children improve or they go down or regress during the summer and, therefore, they're not at the level that was indicated on last year's teacher report." Mr. Bell maintained, however, that he was not "challenging their ability to place kids" but he was attempting to account for changes in the reading abilities of children after the summer vacation period.

Mr. Bell's views about Westside School are presented as further information to be used in the development of an understanding of Mr. Bell's perspective of education in general and his perspective of reading instruction in particular.

Mr. Bell's Future Goals

One of Mr. Bell's primary goals as an educator is to become a school principal because "I think first of all the money." Although Mr. Bell's comment appears to be very insensitive and calculating when presented out of context, Mr. Bell's statement expresses his sincere feelings. One observation he makes concerning male elementary school teachers is that they do not remain in classroom teaching positions for too long a period of time before they seek higher educational positions such as assistant principal or principal or curriculum coordinator. Mr. Bell reasons that many males in elementary education leave the classroom situation to seek higher status and higher paying positions within school systems. Monetary gains accrued from such changes in position often become the sole reason for the actions of male elementary teachers. Mr. Bell explains that the monetary incentives are extremely great for this type of action. He realizes that in order to attain the quality or standard of living he and his wife desire, additional income is essential. Mr. Bell's second reason for wanting to become a principal is that, "...I think that you learn from others, and I feel I could run a school rather well." Mr. Bell explains that he has learned about operating and managing a school from watching several school principals. He expresses the confidence that he could readily manage a school and could effect both management and instructional improvements. Much of Mr. Bell's confidence seems to be based in his ability to manage his own classroom, to communicate with his peers as the reading resource person at Westside School, and to express his sincere interest of children. If Mr. Bell does not attain the goal of becoming a school principal he wants to remain a classroom teacher at the fifth grade level. One of his goals at that position is to create "centers (learning centers) and have the children learn through centers."

Overview of Westside School's Reading Program

As previously indicated, Mr. Bell has taken an interest in reading instruction at Westside Elementary School. Some of his stated positions and actions, however, are contrary to the ideas espoused by a majority of the school's faculty. In the following sections of this chapter, a description of the "official position" regarding the reading program and reading instruction at Westside School will be presented, explained, and analyzed. In addition, Mr. Bell's positions and understandings as regards the reading program will be noted.

The reading program at Westside Elementary School amounts to teaching the children to ready by using the MacMillan R Reading Program. The individual classroom teachers are compelled to use the basal readers, the workbooks and the skill testing elements which form the basis of the MacMillan R Reading Program. This program is used by each teacher in grades one through five. Although techniques of teaching differ from teacher to teacher the content of the reading program remains consistent in each of the classrooms. Each classroom teacher works feverishly to see that the children complete the required texts and workbooks at the appropriate reading level each year.

Current History of the Reading Program Adoption

The history of the adoption of the MacMillan R Program at Westside School is extremely complex, but knowledge of the adoption process is essential to an understanding of the program and the procedures of instruction which occurred in Mr. Bell's classroom. In 1973, the elementary school principals and the curriculum coordinator in the West Educational District of Capital City expressed a need to establish continuity in the curriculum among the schools of the district. The establishment of continuity according to Mrs. Leary was to be a "grass roots approach to curriculum development."

Several steps were taken to initiate the grass roots approach. First, a "reading task force" consisting of teachers and administrators was formed. Second, the task force members developed and adopted a philosophy of reading. Next, representatives of the major reading textbook companies were individually invited to present their company's reading products. Then, the task force members selected four or five reading programs which embodied the philosophy. The four or five representatives made presentations at meetings attended by all West District classroom teachers. Finally, the classroom teachers voted for the one reading program they wanted to use in their classrooms. The MacMillan R Reading Program was selected by a majority of the teachers. Consequently, it became the basal reading program for the West District.

Meanwhile, the faculty at Westside School was "piloting" a new reading series published by Scott Foresman Publishing Company. The teachers used the various program materials and provided the publishers with evaluations and critiques on the effectiveness of the materials. Several of the teachers, including Mr. Bell, participated in piloting the Scott Foresman materials.

According to Principal Leary, "we did not come through feeling real good about it (the piloting process) for some reason. It had a lot to do with the Scott Foresman personnel who came here to work with the teachers." The Scott Foresman personnel were one reason why the Scott Foresman materials were not selected. Added to that reason, Mrs. Leary stated, "politics got into the choice of the (District's) reading program. She explained that one of Capital City's newspapers published an article describing the possible textbook choices and indicating that the Scott Foresman program would be selected. The article was published just before the teachers voted on a program. Mrs. Leary remarked, "many of the teachers were very irritated and very mad, and I think it almost was as though they (teachers) were out to show the newspaper that they (newspaper) were wrong in their summary statement about what textbooks would be used in the West District schools." The final vote of the classroom teachers indicated that the MacMillan R Reading Program received the endorsement of the majority of the teachers in the West District. Consequently, the MacMillan R Program was adopted as the official reading program of the West District and Westside School.

Mr. Bell's View of Reading

Mr. Bell, as mentioned earlier, participated in the project to pilot the Scott Foresman reading materials. He liked those materials and enjoyed using the materials with his children. He indicated that he had voted for the Scott Foresman program and not the MacMillan R Program. Very briefly, the MacMillan R Program is based on a scope and sequence of reading skills, while the Scott Foresman program is based primarily on the presentation of literature as a means of teaching reading. That is, the text stories and the workbook exercises of the MacMillan R Program are presented by the teacher for the purpose of teaching children specific reading skills and then providing for the practice of those skills. On the other hand, in using the Scott Foresman program a teacher concentrates a great deal of attention and energy on the content of the literature contained in the various reader levels.

To try to ascertain Mr. Bell's knowledge and understanding of reading, a general question was asked of him: "What would you do to change the reading program At Westside School?" The following is a presentation of Mr. Bell's answer and a discussion of the concepts Mr. Bell considers to be important to reading instruction in his his classroom.

When asked how he might change the reading program at Westside School, Mr. Bell responded, "I'd throw out MacMillan and get a new series...." Mr. Bell added, "my feeling is that MacMillan R is not a good basal and therefore, I don't feel very comfortable with it." Mr. Bell was adamant in expressing his dislike for the MacMillan R Program. He maintained that the literature contained in the various leveled texts was of poor quality, the arrangement of reading skills and the assignments provided to reinforce the use of the newly taught skills followed little in the way of systematic order, and the workbook assignments had little or no relationship to the text stories. According to Mr. Bell, "there is no correlation between a story and the workbook pages." To illustrate the problem, Mr. Bell claimed that the children often completed their workbook pages without even reading the assigned text story. The children substantiated Mr. Bell's claim. Twenty children were interviewed during the course of the study and only Gini stated that she read the story before she worked on the assigned workbook pages.

In spite of his condemnation of the MacMillan R Program, however, Mr. Bell faithfully "followed" the Program as it was outlined in the teacher's guide to each text level. The word followed is employed here to indicate that the children read the stories, completed the workbook pages, but that Mr. Bell did little in the way of actual teaching of the specific skills contained within the context of the Program. Instead, Mr. Bell used the MacMillan R Reading Program stories to teach the reading skills he deemed important. Mr. Bell explained that the children in his classroom merely "go through the motions" of completing the workbook exercises that were provided, however. Mr. Bell did not appear to teach or provide reinforcement of the use of the particular skills that comprised the MacMillan R Program scope and sequence. In fact, the teaching of the skills contained in the MacMillan R Program was nearly non-existent.

Mr. Bell claimed that he and the children in his classroom "go through the motions" because of the expectations other teachers at Westside School had concerning the reading program. What Mr. Bell meant by this was that he was expected to pass along to a child's next year's teacher information about the child's progress toward the completion of specific MacMillan text levels and the acompanying workbooks. Consequently, Mr. Bell feels obliged to use the MacMillan materials with the children. To neglect or circumvent this obligation would raise serious questions, not only in the minds of the other faculty members but also in the mind of Mrs. Leary, about Mr. Bell's ability to provide adequate and sufficient reading instruction to the children in his class. Therefore, Mr. Bell realized that it was in his best interests to accommodate the system instead of trying to resist it.

In place of the MacMillan R Program, Mr. Bell would have opted for the Scott Foresman program "because it gives more comprehension." Mr. Bell stated that "once children have reached above the third grade level they should be working on comprehension skills." In the lower grades, he advocated the teaching of "word attack skills, phonics, and things like that. But, I also think there has to be some comprehension thrown in somewhere. I think anywhere from kindergarten on up they (children) need that. Now whether it takes only ten percent of you program or fifty percent that doesn't bother me, but you got to have it. And, in many classrooms, they're (children) not being asked."

To illustrate his concern for the teaching of reading comprehension skills Mr. Bell formulated his reading instruction around the selection, teaching, and use of several comprehension skills he considered essential for the children to know and to use as they learned to read. That is, he selected several reading comprehension skills he wanted the children to learn and practice each time they worked with him in a reading group session. In order to work on the skills, Mr. Bell conducted discussions with the children in the reading group sessions. The discussions centered about the content of the stories the children had read. The discussion, in fact, were the heart of the reading instruction. During the discussion of a story, Mr. Bell posed questions to the children which required them to employ one of the comprehension skills Mr. Bell deemed important. The skills Mr. Bell emphasized during the discussions were: a) getting the main idea of the story; b) drawing inferences from the story based on what had been read and on the children's past experience; c) making comparisons within the story as well as comparing situations outside of the story; d) placing facts and events in proper sequence; e) describing the various traits of the characters within a story; f) understanding the theme of a story; g) identifying the mood that the author created in a story; h) recognizing the climax of a story, the high point in the story; and i) thinking critically. Several of these skills did not differ significantly from the skills identified in the MacMillan R Program, but Mr. Bell did not think the skills were emphasized and applied sufficiently in the MacMillan texts. Mr. Bell stated, "a lot of your life you will be doing reading and you'll have to use those skills. I guess to me though the whole process would be to help children have a better understanding of what's going on in the world and in their lives." As a result, Mr. Bell spent a considerable amount of discussion time in each group session having the children learn and use each of these skills.

Mr. Bell painted a very bleak picture of what he knew about how other teachers taught reading comprehension skills to children. He indicated that many teachers did not devote enough time to the teaching of reading comprehension skills. Instead, he thought most teachers spent their reading instructional time teaching word recognition skills and vocabulary development skills. He based his claim on the fact that when the majority of the children first were enrolled in his classroom they were not capable of thinking on their own about what they had read. Mr. Bell cited as an example the case of Angie as she participated in her reading discussion session. "...today Angie could not answer any inferential questions or critical thinking questions. She's completely deficient in that skill. I think the earlier you start kids on that type of question the more comfortable they become with it and the more able they are to handle it. I think her major problem is she has just never had that type of question before and never had practice at it." Mr. Bell maintained that most of the children could obtain the facts and details from a story, but they could not apply the facts and details to other learning situations. In painting this picture, Mr. Bell carefully described much of the problem surrounding the insufficient amount of teaching of reading comprehension skills to children as being rooted in the teachers' strict adherence to the use of reading programs similar to the MacMillan R Program.

Mr. Bell did not use exclusively the MacMillan R Program in his classroom. As previously mentioned in this chapter and described in detail in another chapter, one reading group's discussions and assignments revolved around the use of a common library book, such as The Yearling or Caddie Woodlawn, until the book was completed. For the purpose of supplementing the MacMillan R Program, Mr. Bell attempted to assign each MacMillan reading group a "comprehension book." Mr. Bell explained that, "each group has had specific comprehension books that they read. For example, depending on what level they're reading at...what I would do is select a book that's been judged to have a readability (at the children's reading level) and I would once a week meet with this particular group to discuss various things about the book, the theme, characterizations, inference questions, sequential questions and things like that." Mr. Bell explained his purpose for providing supplementary materials as "when you talk about comprehension it's to help the children learn...how to look at what they're reading and look at it critically and analytically. I think it (reading) goes deeper than recall because most people can answer recall but...inferences, sequential and critical thinking involves a couple of other higher level skills. Hopefully, when they (children) get into other programs and when they get older they'll be able to use that type of thinking."

The supplementary reading materials project was not completed, however. When asked why this project failed Mr. Bell indicated that in previous years he was capable of providing supplementary reading materials for comprehension purposes to each of his reading groups but for some reason he was limited by time constraints. Consequently, supplementary reading materials and activities were not used with the MacMillan groups this year. Mr. Bell consistently maintained, however, that his purpose for providing reading instruction was to increase the children's comprehension abilities and to direct them toward life-long reading and thinking.

Besides the reading discussions and the assignment of workbook pages Mr. Bell's classroom reading program consisted of some other characteristics and opportunities. Each program characteristic was based on Mr. Bell's concern that the children be able to apply the comprehension skills they learned in the reading groups. During the times the children were not meeting with Mr. Bell in the reading group or completing the basal reader assignments, the children were to be reading at their desks materials they had selected to read. In most instances, the materials were library books secured from the school library. Each Monday each child had a scheduled time he/she could go to the library to check-out a book. A child could select a book for pleasure reading, or a book for the biweekly book report assignment, or a book to be read for a language arts assignment. The children read their library books after they had finished their MacMillan text assignments. If a child could not find a library book he/she wanted to read, the child was encouraged to bring a book from home or to select a book from one of the bookcases in Mr. Bell's classroom. On days other than Monday, children desiring to go to the school library had to ask permission from Mr. Bell. In most instances, Mr. Bell granted permission unless he observed that a specific child was abusing the library visitation privilege. Since children had to seek permission to go to the library, Mr. Bell was able to keep account of the number of children who went to the library each day and the frequency with which specific children sought to go to the library.

The discussion sessions, the MacMillan tests and workbooks, and the use of library books comprised the content of Mr. Bell's reading program. Most of the reading groups met only two or three times per week with Mr. Bell for the purpose of discussion. The discussion sessions usually lasted, on the average, about twenty-minutes per meeting. Since the reading period was about seventy-five minutes per day, the children were allowed ample time to complete their reading assignments and to read their library books.

Another element of the Westside School reading program that Mr. Bell wanted to see changed was the notion of testing each child in reading at the beginning of a school year. Mr. Bell stated, "I think that one big mistake teachers make...is that they don't test their kids the first month in the program. My feeling is you let them (children) read for three weeks in your room to get comfortable with you and then you test them." Mr. Bell found this to be a very realistic and sound approach to dealing with children after a three month lay-off from reading activities. Yet, the dilemma in taking this stance, according to Mr. Bell, was that "the other teachers feel I'm threatening them rather than my whole purpose was to see improvement or regression." Mr. Bell cited, as support for his idea of testing the children at the beginning of the school year, the case of Monica, one of the fourth grade children in his classroom. At the beginning of the year, Monica was given a few of the MacMillan R Program reading tests. "She tested out of the program. A couple of our kids went up one whole year in reading." Mr. Bell claimed that if he was not to provide for the testing at the beginning of the school year such cases as Monica's would not be discovered. Mr. Bell's opinion was that a failure to make such discoveries could lead to several "children wasting a year on reading skills and activities they already know and are capable of applying."

A final concern of Mr. Bell's as regards improving reading instruction at Westside School was the notion of "swapping kids for reading instruction." Mr. Bell considered the swapping of children for instructional purposes to be a team-teaching plan. When such a plan is implemented at a particular grade level one teacher teaches all of the low ability children, another teacher instructs the middle or average ability children, and a third teacher works with the high ability children. As mentioned earlier, Mr. Bell's peers expressed fear that such an arrangement would "stigmatize" children, especially the lower ability readers. Mr. Bell did not "buy" that. He thought by following such a plan "you're giving the teacher more time to work with specific children." When Mr. Bell discussed this idea, he emphasized that the purpose of instituting such a plan was to decrease the number of text level groups that any one teacher would instruct. One advantage that Mr. Bell envisioned was the reduction in the number of lesson plans a teacher would be required to make. The lesson plan reduction would result because a teacher working with children of similar abilities and needs could reduce the number of reading groups he/she worked with during reading instructional sessions. This was particularly appealing to Mr. Bell because when he ascertained the reading levels of the children in his class at the beginning of the school year, he was able to form nine separate reading groups. As a result of giving the reading tests, he was able to determine nine different reading levels of skill ability for the children in the classroom. Mr. Bell reasoned that the number of groups he worked with would be significantly reduced under a "swapping" plan. Most of the other fourth and fifth grade teachers at Westside School only formed three reading groups in their classrooms, however. Under Mr. Bell's plan the other teachers would probably swap two of their reading groups. The advantage the other classroom teachers would achieve would be considerably less than the advantage Mr. Bell would achieve. Mr. Bell's hopes of ever achieving the "swapping" of children were minimal, at best, although Mrs. Leary proclaimed, "I would strongly encourage him to organize a team-teaching plan. For Mr. Bell, Mrs. Leary's encouragment was not sufficient enough since there had to be at least two teachers willing to exchange children for the plan to be implemented. At present, the other teachers in the school perceived little or no advantage to such a plan of exchanging children.

Mr. Bell's Philosophy of Reading Instruction

The above descriptions, of Mr. Bell's ideas about comprehension skill instruction, testing at the beginning of a school year, and the exchange of children between teachers for the purposes of providing instruction, illustrate several important characteristics of Mr. Bell's philosophy of reading. First, he appears to be very practical in his approach to the curriculum. That is, he feels teachers should provide instruction in those curricular areas which lead to "life-long" learning. Mr. Bell considers reading comprehension skill instruction to be one area of life-long learning. He reasons that in later schooling children will need to view written and spoken materials critically; therefore, teachers should be preparing our future adult citizens for the tasks they will encounter. Reading comprehension skill training for children should commence as soon as possible in the children's educational careers. This position accounts for Mr. Bell's stand that the initial teaching of comprehension skills must begin as soon as a child enters kindergarten. Mr. Bell's view accords comprehension skills a high place in the hierarchy of the curriculum. Knowledge and application of comprehension skills is critical in order for individuals to function effectively in society. Therefore, teachers must provide attention and instruction in the comprehension area. The teaching of reading skills which do not promote thinking in children are of minimal importance in Mr. Bell's philosophy of reading.

Another cornerstone in Mr. Bell's reading philosophy appears to be his concern with the notion of adjusting instruction to meet the needs of individual children and eliminating unnecessary ventures into materials, ideas, and concepts of which children already have a clear knowledge and understanding. Mr. Bell accounts for this position by administering reading tests to the children in his classroom at the beginning of the school year. Once the appropriate reading level of each child is determined, Mr. Bell places that child in proper materials for instructional purposes. According to Mr. Bell, reliance upon outdated information about children's abilities retards the educational progress of individual children. Reading teachers must attempt to maintain up-to-date knowledge about children's specific abilities because only then can appropriate instruction be provided to each child.

Another philosophical stance Mr. Bell maintains is that reading instruction does not consist only of workbook exercises and practice on worksheets representing isolated skills. On the contrary, he believes that through discussion participants in an educational endeavor come to know and understand the content to be learned and the thoughts of each participant in the undertaking. During sessions of reading instruction, most of the children did use workbooks; but independent worksheets or practice sheets of any kind were never used. Mr. Bell requires the children in his class to apply the knowledge they acquire from their reading. First, this is accomplished in the reading group discussions, where children verbally exchange ideas among themselves and with the teacher concerning the concepts present in the text stories. Next, the notion of group discussions is carried into the subject area of social studies. In this area, as in the reading group sessions, discussion form the basis of instruction. Also, the social studies discussion revolve around the skills Mr. Bell deems important. These skills are the same skills he teaches and requires the children to apply in reading sessions; sequencing, main idea, inferencing, comparing, characterization and the like. These skills appear to provide a common tie between reading and social studies instruction. In addition to the discussion sessions and workbook exercises of his classroom reading program, Mr. Bell requires each child to select and read a book and make an oral and written presentation or report on the content of the book to the rest of the class members. Again, this is another way Mr. Bell encourages the children to share ideas and experiences. Learning to read is more than just the accumulation of reading skills. It is the accumulation of skill knowledge and the ability to assimilate and exchange ideas between several participants.

A final philosophical position Mr. Bell takes is the grouping of children homogeneously for the purposes of reading instruction. Homogeneous grouping for instruction in other cultural settings has not proven to be as beneficial as most educators anticipated (Doucetti & St. Pierre, 1977; Esposito, 1973). By advocating the exchange of children, Mr. Bell is proposing a different and supposedly a more efficient method of organizing and managing reading instruction than what exists at Westside School at the present time.

Mr. Bell's Instructional Practices

Many of the suggestions Mr. Bell made for altering the Westside School reading program are apparent in his plans and actions for delivering reading instruction to the children in his classroom. The following descriptions are presented to explicate Mr. Bell's instructional practices in reading and other subject areas.

According to Mr. Bell, at the beginning of the school year each day, he provided during the reading period, the children in his classroom with the opportunity to read books and other print materials of their own choice. Specific reading instruction was omitted during the first few weeks of school. During that time period, each child was invited to share with Mr. Bell, in an oral discussion, some of the materials and ideas he/she had read. After about three weeks, Mr. Bell, employing the information from his own observations of the children as well as taking the recommendations from each child's previous teacher regarding the child's reading level, administered an "appropriate" level MacMillan R Program reading test. Mr. Bell's intention for testing each child was to determine each child's general instructional level of reading. Once the results were obtained, the children were placed into nine separate reading groups. All of the groups except one were assigned a specific level of the MacMillan R Program. The one group that was not placed in a basal reader level was given a library book to read. At this juncture, a discussion of Mr. Bell's organizational plans for providing instruction in the other subject areas, is essential for a fuller understanding of Mr. Bell's teaching procedures.

The organization and management of the classroom was an extremely important aspect of Mr. Bell's approach to teaching. He spent a great amount of time and care to make certain that the classroom was managed in what he considered to be an "efficient" manner. For Mr. Bell, the term efficient meant keeping a tight control over the learning and social behaviors of the children when they were in the classroom. That is, he wanted to organize the children so that they knew exactly what was expected of them as regards assignments to be completed and the behaviors, both academic and social, that they were permitted to exhibit.

The basic framework of Mr. Bell's classroom, both in terms of physical appearance and in instructional organization, was changed once after five weeks of observations. During the period of change, the observer sensed that Mr. Bell was seeking a more efficient method of organizing instruction for the children. He seemed to be seeking more control over the times the children had to toil on specific assignments, and when the children would, in fact, be permitted to work in particular subject areas. Yet, even with the imposition of more control over the children, Mr. Bell was concerned that the children become more independent in their work styles as well as in their practices of personal communication with members of the class. These two goals, more control and greater independence appear to be contradictory. The following descriptions will help to illustrate that the goals were not contradictory and that the goals were able to co-exist in Mr. Bell's organizational and instructional plans.

Mr. Bell's Initial Organizational Plan

Mr. Bell arranged the classroom to meet specific instructional purposes. There was little concern for traditional classroom arrangements such as desks and chairs set in straight rows.

The arrangement of the furniture in the room reflected Mr. Bell's concern for efficiency in teaching individuals as well as with teaching small groups. Mr. Bell's desk was located on the west side of the room about ten to twelve feet from the front wall blackboard. From this location, he was able to supervise the children in all areas of the classroom. His desk faced in the direction of the only entrance into the classroom. This location enabled Mr. Bell to observe the children as they entered and exited the classroom.

The desks of the children were arranged in two groups of six and two groups of seven desks each. The two groups of six desks were located near the middle of the room close to the front. The two groups of seven desks were arranged to each side of the room and near the back of the room (see Figure 1). The children worked at their own desks except during reading group sessions. Mr. Bell explained that the children, sitting at each of the desk arrangements, were grouped according to their spelling ability. The children with similar spelling abilities were seated together in the same group. Mr. Bell acknowledged that he had segregated the children by the use of this particular organizational plan.

At the west front side of the room, adjacent to Mr. Bell's desk there was a rectangular table with six chairs. The table served as the meeting place for all of the reading groups. The children came to this table to discuss the stories they had read and to receive their next reading assignments.

A majority of Mr. Bell's movement about the room was limited to the areas around his desk and the reading table. He appeared to spend an equal amount of time between each of the two areas. This statement is not to imply that Mr. Bell failed to spend time in other areas of the classroom, but most of his time was spent either at his desk or at the reading table. Whenever a child had a question or was to need assistance, the child had to walk to Mr. Bell's location. Mr. Bell did not journey to the desk groupings very often.

A round table with chairs located in close proximity to the reading table at the front of the room served as the table where spelling tests took place. On top of this table was a tape recorder and a jack-box with several sets of earphones. The children came to this location for the purpose of taking their individual spelling tests. As mentioned earlier, the children's desk groupings were formed primarily but not exclusively upon spelling ability. That is, in one instance one of the desk groupings contained children who were working at three different levels in spelling. Mr. Bell explained that he grouped the children according to their spelling abilities because for him spelling was the most difficult subject area in which to provide appropriate plans and materials. Therefore, he grouped and planned for spelling to assure himself that he was meeting the needs of each child.

Mr. Bell did not meet with or provide personal instruction to the spelling groups. The members of the seven spelling groups were on their own to complete the work that was assigned. At the beginning of a week, the individuals in each spelling group received their very own spelling words via a tape recorded pretest. The pretest for each group was recorded by Mr. Bell. During the week, the children in each group completed the series of assignments Mr. Bell dispensed. On Friday of each week, the children in each group took a post-test of the words they had been assigned to learn. Again, the post-test was administered via a tape recording made by Mr. Bell. The children corrected their own pretests, but once the post-tests were completed the children submitted them to Mr. Bell to be graded.

On the east side of the classroom to the south of the entrance stood a wooden bookcase. The bookcase was divided in many small cubicles. Each cubicle had the name of a child on its front. The name designated that the cubicle belonged to one of the members of the class. This bookcase was identified as the "cubby-hole" by both Mr. Bell and the children. For the children, the cubby-hole was one of the centers of classroom activity. The cubby-holes were the places where Mr. Bell returned the children's papers he had corrected. Mr. Bell also placed in the cubby-holes notes the children were to take home to their parents. Messages to children were also placed in the cubby-holes. After Mr. Bell completed correcting the children's papers, he placed them in a wire basket near the cubby-hole bookcase. When a child had time, he/she filed the corrected papers in the appropriate cubicles. The task of filing papers was not assigned to a specific child but was available to anyone in the class who had the time to complete the task. Almost every day a different child completed the filing. Each child in the classroom was responsible for checking his/her individual cubby-hole each day before leaving school.

At various times during the day, children often gathered at the cubby-hole bookcase to take their corrected papers and to exchange conversation. Frequently, the children seemed to sense when Mr. Bell was watching them. When this occurred, the children often departed from the cubby-hole area rather abruptly. Mr. Bell assigned the cubby-hole cubicles an important role in his system of educational organization. The cubicles were the principal vehicles used to provide communication between the teacher and an individual child about the quality of the work that he/she had completed. For some children, the cubby-hole was the only contact they had with Mr. Bell during the course of a day.

The south end of the classroom was divided into two sections. The section closest to the east wall served as the "cooking area." This was an ideal place to establish a make-shift kitchen. Mr. Bell selected this area for cooking because a sink with running water, a long counter and several storage shelves were located there.

Mr. Bell established the cooking area for two purposes. First, he wanted to instruct the children about how to prepare some simple but nutritious lunches. In conjunction with this, he wanted the children to have some experience in preparing the lunches. Second, he wanted to establish a place in the room where the children could receive some reward after having successfully completed their academic assignments. Mr. Bell initially selected one or two people to be in a group, and then those members selected two or three more individuals they wanted to help in the food preparation. The children in the group brought food from home to be prepared for lunch. This activity usually occurred twice a week with a different group of children participating each time.

Mr. Bell helped the group prepare the food they had brought to school. Each participating member had the opportunity to cook as well as clean up. Once the food was prepared the group members sat and ate together. Some of the foods the children cooked were hot dogs, hamburgers, frozen pizza and other easy to prepare items. Pots, pans, an electric fry pan, an electric toaster oven, a hot plate, and various kitchen utensils were located in the cooking area.

As previously mentioned, Mr. Bell used the cooking area to present the children with a means of reward. When a child submitted his/her assigned work on time, a specific number of points was awarded by Mr. Bell. After a child had accumulated two hundred and fifty points, Mr. Bell agreed to cook lunch for the child. During the course of the study, only one child was treated to lunch cooked by Mr. Bell. This program did encourage the children and they talked about it frequently. In addition, the goal seemed to be a reasonable one for them to attain.

The second section along the back wall contained a bulletin board and a counter area. A slide projector or movie projector usually occupied this area. This was an area used during science instruction. Since science instruction was not observed during the early weeks of this study no statements concerning the content or the organization of instruction can be presented.

Most of the west wall of the room was comprised of windows. The west windows faced in the direction of the play areas to the back of the school. Several small bookcases containing trade books were located near the window area. The shelves of the bookcases were lined with books which the children frequently used during the designated reading time. When a child was not permitted access to the library for any reason, the trade books in the classroom bookcases were used by the child. When children had some free reading time, they often selected books from this area.

A bulletin board on which the children placed drawings, poems, and stories related to a language arts theme was located at the north end of the west wall. Inititially, the theme of the stories and poems was "My Pet." The theme was changed to "Animal Characters" after the first two weeks of the observation period. The children exhibited and expressed great interest in this area. Many times children walked to the language arts bulletin board to read the works of other children in the classroom. Mr.Bell encouraged the children to write at least one story each week. Ideas for the stories were generated by the children. The children were permitted to create stories from ideas in books they had read, from experiences they had had in their lives, and from their own imaginations.

In addition to the stories, the children were required to create a complete sentence from a "kernal sentence" Mr. Bell placed on the front blackboard each day. A kernal sentence was the beginning idea to which the children were to end the thought in complete sentence form. The children were at their leisure to complete the kernal sentence since they did not have to submit it in until dismissal time each day.

The dissemination of most assignments was organized around a table or schedule that each child constructed. The table was portioned into scheduled segments of time. On Thursday preceding a week, Mr. Bell gave to the children their assignments in each subject area for the coming week. The children filled-in the table placing the assignments where they wished. Each child's was different. The only constant item on the schedule was the time the children met for reading instruction. Mr. Bell assigned the times he was to meet with each reading group. The children scheduled other activities any time they wanted. For example, one child may have allotted the first time frame on Monday to social studies and the same time frame to science on Tuesday. Another child may have assigned math to the first time frame on Monday and reserved the same time frame on Tuesday for reading group session. Each child was responsible for the work in each time frame. When a child was not working, Mr. Bell often asked, "what does you schedule say?"

The children assumed a lot of responsibility in determining the times that they completed most of their tasks under this organizational plan. Mr. Bell knew what was expected of each child, but he was not always cognizant of the time frame under which the child would complete a task. The children were under some restrictions, however. Mr. Bell collected the time schedules after the children filled them out for the week. He returned the schedules after he checked each schedule to make sure that each child had included all of the weekly assignments.

Since most of the time schedules were different, little in the way of direct instruction occurred in any content area other than in reading. For the most part, the children read their assignments, completed the written work, and moved on to the next assignment. For example, in social studies the fourth grade children were working in a text about world cultures while the fifth graders were reading about the early explorers of the New World. The children at each level read their textbooks and answered the questions from the text and/or questions prepared by Mr. Bell. Once a week or so each group met with Mr. Bell to discuss the content of the readings and questions. Little in the way of teacher participation or instruction occurred in this subject area except during the discussion sessions. This organizational framework was similar in mathematics as well.

While the children worked on their assignments Mr. Bell spent his time meeting with the various reading groups, correcting completed assignments or answering questions that the children raised. He stationed himself primarily at the reading table or his desk. Most often the children with questions came to him, but once in awhile Mr. Bell would wander among the children to see that they were working. Invariably various children would stop him to ask a question or to have him check what they were working on. Mr. Bell seemed to like the contact with the children but appeared more comfortable when the children came to him at the reading table or his desk. This condition was evidenced by more animated exchanges between Mr. Bell and the children when he was situated at either one of these locations. Much of the time Mr. Bell spent at his desk or the reading table was devoted to correcting the children's assignments and recording in his rank book the grades each child had achieved. Also, Mr. Bell spent a considerable amount of time working to develop a new organizational plan for the classroom which he called "centers."

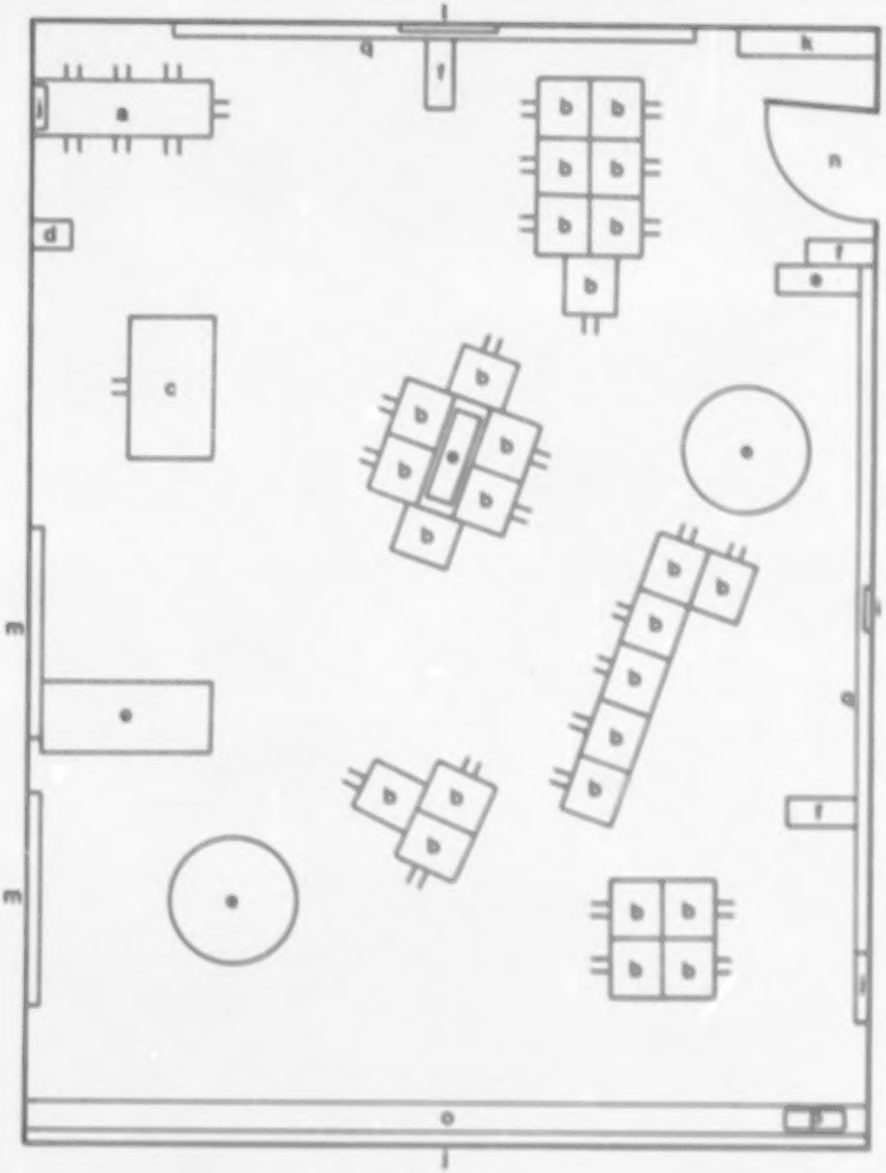
Mr. Bell's Plan for Centers

Mr. Bell instituted a new classroom organizational plan approximately seven weeks from the end of the school year. The children were not made aware of the impending change in the classroom organization until after they had returned to school from a week's vacation. Mr. Bell labeled his new plan a "centers approach" to teaching. Many changes in the operation of the classroom followed the initiation of this plan.

On the first day of the new organizational procedures, chaos prevailed for much of the morning. After Mr. Bell explained to the children about the arrangement of the room and the practices that would be followed for the remainder of the school year, calm seemed to predominate. The children encountered the first change upon entering the room in the morning. The desks and other furniture had been rearranged. Instead of four groupings of desks, there were five desk groups. The location of each grouping had been changed and in most cases the children were not situated with the same children they had been sitting with prior to the vacation period. In the front of the room, near the blackboard area, seven desks were arranged into two rows of three desks facing each other and one desk at the end of the two rows. This group of desks was flanked by a bookcase which separated the desks from the view of the reading table on the west side of the room. Another cluster of six desks was grouped around a small rectangular table located in the middle of the classroom. This desk grouping was almost directly in front of Mr. Bell's desk. Next, six desks in the shape of an "L" were located on the east side of the room close to and facing in the direction of the east blackboard. A large oval table which had been used previously for the spelling test station was situated to the north of this desk grouping. A small bookcase formed a barrier between the southern end of this grouping and the cooking area. Just beyond the bookcase and toward the south-center of the classroom, a group of four desks was situated in the form of a square. This desk grouping was in close proximity to the science center. A final grouping of three desks was located to the north and west of the group of four desks. These desks were in the shape of a triangle. This desk group was flanked on the west by a round oval table and a bookcase protruding into the center of the room from the windowed west wall. Mr. Bell's desk, the reading table on the west side of the room and the cubby-hole bookcase on the east side of the classroom remained unchanged in the new organizational configuration (see Figure 2).

The organization of instruction changed drastically too. One of the most significant changes was the establishment of seven "center" stations. A center station was a specific learning area in the room designated for the purpose of a study in a certain content by the children. The seven study areas were social studies, science, art, mathematics, spelling/handwriting, independent study, and language arts. These study centers were in addition to the reading group sessions which remained unchanged under the new organizational plan.

The children no longer were required to construct time schedules for when they would work on their assignments in each of the content areas. Now, each day Mr. Bell wrote a master schedule on the front blackboard designating the times a center group would work in each content area. Each content area was not scheduled every day. When a center group was scheduled to work at a specific learning station, the group of children spent between thr'ty and forty-five minutes working at that center.



a. Reading Table
b. Desks
c. Teachers Desk
d. File Cabinet
e. Tables
f. Book Cases
h. Free Standing Globe
i. Clock
j. Bulletin Boards
k. Closet
l. Screen
m. Windows
n. Door
o. Counter
p. Sink
q. Black Board
r. Spelling Table

Figure 2: Concera classroom organizational plan.

The scheduling of instruction occurred on a rotating basis. That is, one center group worked at one learning station while each of the other center groups was working at one of the other stations. On cue from Mr. Bell, each center group moved on to the next center station. For example, if a center group of children began to work in mathematics they would, upon cue from Mr. Bell, switch to the next center station, which was the science station. In like manner, the children at the science center would switch to the independent study station. Mr. Bell controlled the amount of time the children spent at each station and the movement of the children from one station to the next.

As a result of the new organizational plan, Mr. Bell designated three of the desk arrangements as learning and teaching stations. Most of the children continued to remain at their own desks during the reading period. But, at all other times, the children moved to various other desk positions as they worked at different center stations. Consequently, the new organizational plan required much coordination of movement within the room for the teacher and the children. The children had to move quietly and remember to carry with them all the materials they would need at each center station, because they would not be allowed to go back to their original desk to pick up their materials.

In addition to the reading groups, each child became a member of two new grouping arrangements under the new organizational plan. The reading groups remained unaffected under the new plan. The only significant change in reading instruction was that everyone was scheduled for reading time from 8:45 A.M. until 10:00A.M. each day. During that time frame, the reading groups met periodically with Mr. Bell, the children completed their reading assignments, they went to the school library, and they did their independent reading. There were no exceptions. The children were not allowed to work in any other content areas during the reading time period as they could under the old instructional schedule.

As previously mentioned, the composition of the desk groupings was changed with the advent of the centers approach. Mr. Bell made a concerted effort to balance the heterogeneous groupings based on age/grade, sex, learning style, and the sociability of each child. The grouping of children based on spelling ability was abolished. As an example of the new plan for grouping children at the various desk arrangements, Mr. Bell placed Andrea, Missy, and Patty together in a group with four other children. According to Mr. Bell, this was done in hopes that Andrea and Missy would assist Patty when she experienced difficulty. Andrea and Missy were identified by Mr. Bell as being "bright, kind,...understanding, and willing to help others who were experiencing some learning problems." Patty, as previously stated, was a low ability reader. Therefore, Mr. Bell placed these children together in a group to use the strengths of Andrea and Missy to help meet Patty's instructional needs. Other similar arrangements were also made in the classroom.

The second new group to which each child belonged was his/her "center" group. Mr. Bell formed five center groups and identified each group by a color: yellow, blue, black, green, and red. He explained that in the formation of the center groups "...I tried looking who was (a) dependable worker, what you might say above average. Who was a behavior problem, who wasn't? And I tried to look at their skills. I did not want to get children who could either antagonize each other or would have difficulty working together because they would talk a lot. I wanted a mixture. Looking at all things, I tried to accomplish what would be a good group or acceptable group."

In order to illustrate specific management aspects within the new organizational plan, a description of each center will follow. The seven desks grouped at the front of the room were designated as the social studies center station. The bookcase flanking this area contained many of the fourth and fifth grade social studies materials. The social studies curriculum was determined by curriculum committees composed of teachers within Capital City's school system. The materials Mr. Bell used to provide instruction to the fourth graders were a text, People in the Land, and another text about the Mid West State. With the fifth graders, Mr. Bell employed the

Data Bank and a text entitled *Inquiry About America*. The social studies assignments Mr. Bell distributed, to accompany each of the materials, were in packet form. Each packet varied in size anywhere from one to eight pages. The packets consisted of questions, maps, tables, and charts which the children were required to use and complete. After the children completed their assignments, Mr. Bell conducted discussion sessions with each of the grade level groups about the ideas they were learning. The discussions were held about once per week. The only active role Mr. Bell took in the social studies instruction was during the weekly discussion sessions. In these sessions, he directed the questioning. Mr. Bell described the social studies discussion questioning as follows: "In reading I've told you the things I think are important. I try to bring that out in social studies too. I ask comparison questions, critical thinking questions, fact questions. ...I try to get those three things into the social studies. I try to have the children say what reasons they think caused this, what was done, how could this have been improved? I try to make them think. I have factual questions, but I try to have more inferential questions and critical thinking questions." At times other than the discussion sessions, the children were on their own to complete their social studies assignments. When questions evolved about the content of an assignment, however, Mr. Bell often suggested various avenues for the children to pursue.

The six desks located directly in front of the east blackboard were designated as the mathematics learning station. All mathematics work was to be completed at this station. The directions for each child's math assignment were placed on the blackboard every day. In most instances, two sets of assignments were given: a fourth grade assignment; and a fifth grade assignment. Sometimes individual names of children with specific directions for math next to their names were written on the blackboard. During the time the centers organizational plan was in operation, Mr. Bell spent some portion of each day instructing the children at the mathematics learning station.

The cooking center did not change in appearance under the centers plan and was not used for the remainder of the time the study was in progress. No explanation of the change was provided by Mr. Bell except that the end of the school year was "closing in fast."

The science area changed little under the centers approach. The only significant changes were the appearance of several chairs clustered together facing the west wall of the room, and a change in the specific science topic under study. The chairs were used by the children when watching filmstrips, which remained the principal instructional mode in science under the centers approach. The assignments for science were posted on the front blackboard next to the master schedule for each day.

As in social studies, the children were given sheets of specific questions to answer for each filmstrip they watched. Once the science assignments were completed the children turned them in to Mr. Bell. Mr. Bell had almost no contact with the children at this learning station. In fact, the only visible task performed at the station was to maintain order among the children.

A round table in front of the windows on the west wall of the room became the art center. The children were asked to bring from home any paper containers or other materials that could be recycled. Many items were placed all over the top of the table. As the children completed their assigned tasks at each learning station, they were encouraged by Mr. Bell to visit the art center and to create whatever they wished. Mr. Bell established the art station so as to provide the children who completed their assigned work with an opportunity to express themselves in a creative endeavor. Styrofoam paper puppets were one of the most popular project items the children created. Again, as at several of the other center stations, Mr. Bell took almost no part in this area except to maintain control over the behavior of the children.

To the north of the art center, a rectangular table with four chairs served as the independent study station. According to Mr. Bell, he established the independent study center to afford each child the opportunity to explore some aspect of the world that was of interest to the child and he/she wanted to learn more about the topic. The initiation of work at this center began with each child selecting a topic. Each child was free to choose whatever topic he/she wished to pursue. For example, some children elected to make a study of their hobby. Each child was to develop a plan of study, conduct the necessary research and work by using the various facilities of the school and classroom, prepare a brief presentation of the topic, and then make a presentation either to a small group of selected children or to the whole class. Beyond providing the time to work on the projects, checking the plans of each child, and making periodic observations of the work, Mr. Bell initiated little contact with the children as they worked at the independent study learning station. Basically, the children were on their own to plan, develop, and present their own topics. Mr. Bell exercised control over each child at the independent study station only insofar as he stipulated a date for each child's presentation to the class.

The operation of the other learning stations, spelling/handwriting and language arts, remained about the same under the centers approach as they had under the previous organizational plan.

The last element of concern as regards Mr. Bell's organizational plan was his management of the children's behavior.

One method of control, the use of organized learning activities in the various content areas, has been described extensively. A second control procedure Mr. Bell employed was the application of classroom rules. According to Mr. Bell, a set of classroom rules was established at the beginning of the school year. The rules were developed by Mr. Bell with input from the children. The children appeared to have a well developed knowledge and understanding of not only the rules but also the consequences which would accompany any infractions of the rules. Consequently, the atmosphere under which inhabitants of the classroom interacted was very amicable and sociable. Yet, the children were aware of the behavioral limits within the classroom.

As for Mr. Bell's role in enforcing the rules, he appeared to use restraint most of the time and in fact rarely did he strictly enforce a rule. The only instances in which rules were observed to be directly addressed by Mr. Bell was when the actions of a child became disturbing to others within the classroom. Mr. Bell was not a tyrant nor did he appear to rely heavily upon the rules to maintain control. That is, he was not continually harping at the children for minor transgressions of the rules. The children were extended an enormous amount of responsibility for their own actions and freedom of movement and speech in their daily activities within the room. Mr. Bell relied on the children's good judgment of right and wrong to govern their behavior and not upon the strict imposition and enforcement of the rules. Consequently, the children had a healthy respect for Mr. Bell's authority and although a few children often tried to push his patience to the far limits the children did not exhibit actions of disrespect for Mr. Bell or for other members of the class. Each child appeared to respect the rights of all other inhabitants in the classroom.

In order to depict the atmosphere and control in the classroom, a few of the rules and their effects are presented. For example, the children were allowed to chew gum in the room, but anyone caught blowing a bubble would lose his/her privilege to chew gum. The children were constantly chewing gum but not once during the observational period was anyone observed blowing a bubble in the class. Another example of acceptable behavior was soft talking between children at their desk groupings as they worked on the various assignments. If the conversations became too loud or Mr. Bell sensed that the children were not working on their assignments, he rang a bell he kept on his desk or at the reading table. Then, he called out the names of the offenders and wrote their names down on his calendar pad. During that day, if Mr. Bell had to speak to one of those children again he required that the offender isolate himself/herself from the rest of the class for a five minute period. The isolation process usually involved having the children sit at the front of the room facing the wall. The child was not to communicate with anyone. At the end of five minutes, the child returned to his desk to resume his work. During the observation period, this action occurred only once. The children were well aware of the classroom rules and did not make a practice of breaking the rules. The enforcement of these rules and others like them enabled Mr. Bell to maintain a sense of order in his classroom.

Mr. Bell as Organizer-Manager

The material presented in this chapter describes Mr. Bell's perspective as an educator. The descriptions depict Mr. Bell as an individual deeply interested in organization and management of instruction. Mr. Bell does not appear to fit the description of a "teacher" in the traditional sense of the term. A teacher is defined in the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (1973) as one who "imparts knowledge or skill; or gives instruction." This is not to say or imply that Mr. Bell is a failure in the classroom. To the contrary, he so finely organizes his classroom, the subject areas, the materials, and the children, that instruction emerges from the organization. He does not attempt to impart knowledge, but he does lead the children to make discoveries. He guides children to obtain knowledge. For example, Mr. Bell was seldom seen teaching a reading skill such as drawing inferences. He did not, through example or practice, show the children how to use one piece of information from a story and another piece of information gained from their experiences to draw an inference. He did not ask the children, "What do you infer from this?" He did not give the children several statements and ask them to draw inferences. Yet, the children made inferences from their readings as a result of the organization of the content of the reading discussion groups. The questions Mr. Bell posed demanded that the children use the information from the story and their past experiences to arrive at satisfactory conclusions. As regards other elements of organization, Mr. Bell knew exactly what he wanted the children to learn and accomplish and so he planned each day so that his goals would be achieved. Mr. Bell developed a schedule each day around which the activities of the children revolved.

Mr. Bell is also a manager of instruction in the sense that he determines the needs of the children and attempts, especially in reading, mathematics, language arts and spelling, to place each child at his/her appropriate level of ability. Mr. Bell employs managerial abilities in order to monitor the activities of the various instructional groups operating in his classroom. An individual lacking a high degree of management ability would not be able to maintain the sophisticated scheduling, the use of multiple texts in various subject areas, the knowledge of which children had completed what assignments and various other characteristics typical of educational management situations. Mr. Bell possesses each of these traits and employs them in his teaching.

CHAPTER VI

THE CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVE OF READING AND READING INSTRUCTION

The organization of Mr. Bell's classroom and the activities surrounding the delivery of reading instruction, particularly the reading group sessions, were described in Chapter Four. The descriptions of Mr. Bell's organizational structure for reading instruction were furnished so as to allow the reader an opportunity to develop an understanding of the role and the magnitude of importance that Mr. Bell ascribed to reading instruction within his classroom.

Mr. Bell's personal perspective of teaching - more specifically of teaching reading - in an elementary school classroom was presented in Chapter Five. The primary goal of that chapter was to describe Mr. Bell's perspective of the academic climate, the subject content and the social communications which existed as he taught the children to read and to apply the skills of reading. Descriptions of many contextual elements related to reading instruction in Mr. Bell's classroom were included in each of these chapters. Some of the contextual elements identified were: (a) the criteria, procedures, and processes employed in forming the reading groups; (b) the freedom of movement of the children within the classroom; (c) the establishment of classroom rules for maintaining order; (d) the independence of the children to schedule their time for working in the subject contents; and (e) the accessibility of Mr. Bell to answer questions during reading instruction.

All of the descriptions of reading instruction up to this juncture, however, have been decidedly one-sided. That is, the descriptions have been based primarily upon the perspective of the classroom teacher, Mr. Bell. The objective of the present chapter is to view the teaching and learning of reading from a different standpoint. The focus of this chapter is on the description of the children's perspective as regards their view of Mr. Bell's classroom in general and the reading instruction in particular.

A Child's Perspective of Learning to Read

A child's perspective of reading is composed of a set of personally co-ordinated explicit as well as tacit beliefs, ideas, and actions. These elements of behavior are present as each child interacts with a teacher and/or other children in problematic learning and social situations which occur within a classroom setting. A child' perspective of learning to read is formed from his/her total knowledge and understanding of the setting, the content of the educational curriculum, and the social relationships which are established within the bounds of a particular school and classroom. Moreover, a child brings to a classroom specific knowledge and certain predispositions to learn to read which are acquired as a result of living and interacting with other inhabitants within a community. In a previous chapter, a community was defined as the city, neighborhood, and home environments in which an individual lives and participates. Over and above these environments, some children have been exposed to other perspectives as a result of living in various geographical locations. Each environment to which a child is exposed contributes to the overall perspective that the child forms.

Several factors which affect a child are of concern when undertaking an in-depth description and analysis of the formation of a child's perspective of learning to read. The factors affecting the formation of a child's perspective of reading are:

- the child's academic and social background as well as his/her academic and social position within the classroom setting.
- the child's description and characterization of the content and the process/procedures of learning to read.
- the child's representation of the formation, organization and management of reading groups and other classroom grouping arrangements.
- the child's application of reading skills in the content areas such as social studies and science.
- the child's development and employment of specific criteria to evaluate his/her own learning in the classroom.
- the child's development of criteria to evaluate the appropriateness of the beliefs, ideas, and actions of other children and the classroom teacher.

Children form their perspectives based upon their experiences both in and out of school, upon their interaction with peers and teachers, and upon activities and discussions in the home. As regards experiences within a school setting, children are guided in the formation of their perspectives on learning to read by several different teachers during the span of four or five years at the elementary school level. That is, children often are exposed to very different perspectives of teaching reading based upon the knowledge, philosophical beliefs and attitudes toward reading of individual teachers. The processes and procedures one teacher utilizes to deliver reading instruction may be counter-productive in terms of helping a child form a perspective, because the child has already begun to develop a perspective based on the instruction the child received from another teacher. For example; many teachers establish their reading instruction upon the children's oral reading of the various basal reader stories and the completion of the accompanying workbook pages and worksheets. Children exposed to the daily repeated use of the workbook materials tend to associate reading with the "completing of workbooks." In another instance, many of these same children view reading as providing one word answers to complete the questions in the workbook. Children exposed to the recurrent fill-in-the-blanks activities often identify the classroom reading time as only that time reserved to finish the workbooks and worksheets. For these children time which is spent reading a library book or a social studies text is not acknowledged as reading at all.

On the other hand, many teachers organize their reading instruction around an open given and take discussion between the teacher and several children. A basal reader story the children have read is usually the theme upon which the discussion is based. Children who have been involved with discussing the content of a story with their teacher often speak of reading as "communication." That is, reading is the exchange of words and ideas between the story's author and the readers. Moreover, many of these children recognize reading time as any time they read whether they read a library book or a content area text. Consequently, a child's perspective is molded by the beliefs, ideas, and actions of the classroom teacher for the period of time the child is taught by that particular teacher. Over the course of an elementary school education a child is introduced to several perspectives. A child's previous experiences influence the development of his/her perspective of learning to read.

Obtaining the Child's Perspective of Learning to Read

One of the initial goals of this study was to obtain information about the beliefs, opinions, ideas, and actions of all the inhabitants within a specific elementary school classroom about what the inhabitants understood to be the essence of reading, reading instruction, and the application of the reading skills. The views of the children, therefore, were to be an integral component in the development of a description and understanding of what transpires within a particular classroom as regards reading instruction. When the perspective of the inhabitants within a setting has been ascertained, the teaching and learning of reading in that setting is known.

Therefore, the following is a description of the perspective the children in Mr. Bell's classroom revealed through their actions as they were observed during the reading time each day. In addition to the observations, an individual interview with twenty-six children in the classroom was conducted over the four months of the study. Eight of the twenty children interviewed participated in two or more interviews. Of the eight children who participated in more than one interview four children were interviewed two times, three children took part in three interviews and once child participated in four interviews. The purpose of the interviews was to gather information about each child's personal perspective as concerned learning to read and applying the skill of reading in his/her every day life. Consequently, the information acquired from the observations and the interviews is used to depict the children's viewpoints about learning to read and about Mr. Bell's reading instruction.

An interview with a child was scheduled to occur directly after the child had attended his/her reading group discussion session with Mr. Bell. The interviews were arranged in this manner so as to obtain the child's view of his/her reading instruction while the activities were still part of his/her conscious thoughts. Therefore, once a reading group session ended one child from the group was asked to bring the reading materials he/she was assigned to complete, by the next reading group session, to the interview. The interviews were held in a quiet corner of the school library.

As a result of the observations and interviews, twenty individual perspectives - sets of beliefs, ideas, and actions - of reading and reading instruction were obtained. In order to organize, view, and present the children's perspectives in a coherent manner, a framework consisting of three categories of readers was established: (a) the non-appliers; (b) the tacit appliers; and (c) the appliers. In a previous chapter, the appellations, the definitions and an illustrative description for the categories were provided. The focus of this chapter is to identify and describe in detail the perspectives of the children for each category of reader.

Common Characters of the Children's Perspectives

Before viewing the personal perspectives of several individual children in each of the three categories of readers, some characteristics which were common to all the children's perspectives are described. Several common characteristics seem to transcend the categories of readers in Mr. Bell's classroom.

The children recognized that Mr. Bell formed the reading groups based primarily on the individual scores from the reading tests he gave at the beginning of the school year. The children did not understand completely their placements in specific levels of the MacMillan R Reading Program, but they expressed the view that the children who attained similar test scores were grouped together. In conjunction with the knowledge about the placements in reading groups, the children were able to identify the general reading ability levels of most of the inhabitants in the class. For example, without exception, each child was able to identify his/her classmate who "experienced the most difficulty in reading." The children mentioned considering two factors in forming an appraisal of reading ability. The first factor was the text level in the MacMillan R Reading Program that each child was assigned by Mr. Bell. According to the children in the classroom, the child experiencing the most difficulty in reading was reading in the lowest level reader text used in the classroom. The second factor the children employed to evaluate reading ability was how well each child read orally. The child experiencing the most difficulty reading orally and the child who read orally most frequently to Mr. Bell in the reading group discussion sessions was identified as the child experiencing the most difficulty in reading. As concerned both factors, all the children in the classroom identified Patty as having the most difficulty in reading. The frequency of oral reading was in fact an accurate measure of reading ability in the classroom. The two children who were the most frequent oral readers during the reading group discussion sessions were identified by Mr. Bell as the readers he considered to be having the most difficulty in reading.

In like manner, the children identified the "best reader" in the classroom. Although the children lacked consensus in selecting a specific individual who read the best, they expressed the unanimous opinion that someone from the Yearling Group was the best reader. The children employed two criteria for evaluating the best reader. The first criterion mentioned was the ability of a child to read orally "without making lots of mistakes." The children agreed that being able to identify and pronounce the words was an important characteristic to be considered when identifying the best reader. A second criterion the children used to select the best reader was the frequency and number of books a child read. For example, some children identified Lezlie as the best reader "because she is always reading a book." Other children selected Monica as the best reader because she "reads and often rereads the same story to get the story better." Other members of the Yearling Group who were identified as the best reader in the class were selected because they didn't make mistakes when reading aloud.

The information on the identification of the reader experiencing the most difficulty and the best reader is presented to show that the children in Mr. Bell's classroom appeared to establish a sophisticated system for evaluating the reading ability of various class members. Each child who was interviewed was aware of the performance of the other children in the class.

As regards other forms of instructional organization which Mr. Bell employed in the classroom, the children were not able to identify the criteria he used to group specific children together. This was especially true of the "centers grouping" arrangement that Mr. Bell developed for the purpose of delivering instruction in the content area subjects. The children were unable to express how the groups were formed. In fact, the children were not concerned as to why they were grouped with certain individuals and not with others. The children seemed to be very accepting of the groupings and understanding of the idiosyncrasies of various members in the class. Very few arguments were observed to occur between the children as they worked together in the various grouping situations.

During the course of the interviews, each child was asked to describe and explain what work he/she had completed during the reading group session. In most instances, each child explained the procedures Mr. Bell followed. That is, each child usually accounted for the order in which he/she engaged in the various activities with Mr. Bell, but each child neglected to discuss the content of the reading activities. After a child had explained the procedures he/she was asked to describe the content of the reading group sessions. One activity most of the children mentioned was the workbook pages they had been assigned. For the children working in the MacMillan R Reading Program, the workbook exercises were an integral aspect of reading in terms of time they spent completing the reading assignments. Almost half of the time a reading group met with Mr. Bell was devoted to assigning the workbook pages and reviewing the direction of the specific workbook activities. The children were assigned a specific number of pages at each reading session. The number of pages which accompanied each story in a basal text was determined by the authors of the MacMillan R Reading Program. Mr. Bell usually followed the recommendations of the Program's authors and assigned all the workbook pages that were designed to accompany a particular story. In most instances, four pages accompanied each story. The children were required to submit the completed workbook exercises to Mr. Bell by a designated time - usually the next day school was in session.

The children were asked to explain not only the content of the assigned workbook pages, but also how they thought the activities helped them in their reading. Most of the children described the procedures and processes they were to use for completing the reading activities on each assigned page. The children, however, were incapable of explaining the relationship of each workbook activity to the overall process of reading. That is, many children expressed the view that no relationship existed between completing the workbook activities and reading the basal text story. For example, most children were unable to associate the workbook activities with learning specific reading skills which they would use in the reading process. The children, in fact, did not provide reasons for completing the workbook exercises except for the fact that Mr. Bell required them to complete the assignments. The entire process of finishing the workbook assignments appeared to be very mechanical. The children were incapable of explaining the meaning of completing the workbook assignments. The workbook assignments appeared to be meaningless to the children except to satisfy the requirements imposed by the teacher.

The children also were asked when they completed their workbook assignment in relation to the other aspects of their reading assignment, reading the basal text story. Many children responded that they "do the pages before I read the story." Mr. Bell explained that the "pages were designed to be completed after the children read the story. But, I know most do them before they read." The authors of the teacher's manual for the MacMillan R Reading Program suggest that the workbook pages be completed after the children read their story. The workbook pages were included in the MacMillan Program to provide the children with practice in applying specifically designated skills of reading.

The attitudes the children expressed about the completion of the workbook pages paralleled the attitude Mr. Bell professed. Mr. Bell, as was described in the previous chapter, attached little value to the workbook pages and often criticized their content. He did require, however, that the children complete the workbook assignment because he was expected to provide evidence that the children in his classroom had completed their reading workbooks. At the end of the school year, Mr. Bell was to account for the progress that each child had made during the school year. Most of the children explained that Mr. Bell never reviewed the corrected workbook pages with them. Apprarently, the children's successes and/or failures on the numerous workbook pages were of little importance to the development of the reading comprehension skills Mr. Bell deemed important.

The above descriptions are examples of some common elements of the perspectives of reading and reading instruction which the children in Mr. Bell's classroom revealed during the study. The next several sections of this chapter are presented as an in-depth view of the individual perspectives of nihe children, three from each category of reader, in Mr. Bell's classroom.

The Non-Appliers

The non-appliers of reading skills were identified as children in Mr. Bell's classroom who: (a) were unable to name a specific reading skill; (b) were incapable of defining or describing the content of a reading skill; and (c) were inept when asked to apply a specific reading skill to complete a content area assignment. Three children were identified as non-appliers: Patty, Matt, and Shawn. Each of the non-appliers was dealt with individually in Mr. Bell's organizational scheme for reading. During the course of the study, these three children did not meet together to receive reading instruction. On the contrary, each non-applier met alone with Mr. Bell to discuss the content of the stories Mr. Bell assigned to each child. Patty, Matt, and Shawn were not categorized as non-appliers based on a specific reading test score, but were judged to be non-appliers on the basis of their daily reading performance and activity in the classroom.

Each child who was identified as a non-applier, for the purpose of this study, was assigned to a basal reader text level from the MacMillan R Reading Program. When the school year began, Patty and Matt, two children new to the Westside School enrollment area, were grouped together in the same reading group. Initially, they were reading from a low third grade level text. Mr. Bell quickly changed that arrangement, however, when he discovered that Patty was unable to "read and understand the material" at the same level of instruction as Matt. Consequently, Patty was removed from the group and was identified as a group by herself. Mr. Bell assigned Patty a second grade level text from the MacMillan R Reading Program. Shawn, a fifth grader, was assigned to read from a low fourth grade level text.

Mr. Bell commented that the progress that each non-applier made in reading during the school year as "very minimal." Patty completed [2] only one text level and was beginning to work in a second text level by the end of the school year. Matt had completed three text levels from the reading series and was beginning to work in a fourth text. Shawn had completed four separate texts from the reading program.

Patty's Perspective of Reading

At the beginning of the observation for this study, Patty was assigned a third grade level text from the MacMillan R Program. During the initial interview with Patty, she stated that when she began working with Mr. Bell "I got put back in a book that was a little easier." She was unable to explain a reason for the move, but she indicated that at her previous school she had been reading in "level twenty-eight" of that school's reading program. Patty mentioned that she found the work in Mr. Bell's classroom to be "easier than the work I had at my other school." In conjunction with this statement, she provided the observation that Mr. Bell "gives you work in the lower levels so you can do work in high school."

Patty described reading as "the time I spend with Mr. Bell reading out loud." To this description she added that the time she spent answering the questions in her workbook was also reading time. She stated that reading time was provided by Mr. Bell so "we can think about what (a) story is about and what it's trying to explain." The content of Patty's oral reading was usually a story from her basal reader text. In most instances, she had read the material prior to meeting with Mr. Bell in the reading discussion session. Patty related that she read aloud to Mr. Bell for several reasons. First, a story was read aloud "if we like the story." Next, Patty stated she read aloud "because it (story) is short." A final reason Patty provided for reading aloud was so "Mr. Bell would hear me read and know I understand what I read." Patty equated reading aloud with understanding. Yet, when Mr. Bell asked specific questions of Patty about what she had read aloud to him she was frequently unsuccessful in providing appropriate answers. When asked why she appeared to have difficulty answering Mr. Bell's questions Patty admitted that often she didn't "know what (the) words mean."

Patty's pattern of working with reading materials was often erratic. While working on her reading workbook assignments she completed the easiest parts of the pages first. Frequently, Patty completed part of a page, then went on to another page and finished what she knew there, and so on. She explained that when she did not understand how to complete a specific exercise she asked Mr. Bell to re-explain the page to her. Patty indicated that she was not hesitant to seek Mr. Bell's help with her reading assignments when she experienced difficulty. Patty stated that she completed her workbook pages before she began to read the assigned story, however. When she was asked to explain the directions and content of some of her workbook exercises Patty was usually able to tell what was expected of her on each page. She stated that she did not know the reasons why the specific pages were assigned. When Patty was asked to explain the workbook assignments a day after Mr. Bell had explained to her what to do, she experienced some problem. In these instances, Patty was unable to explain what she was to do or why she was expected to complete the pages. At this juncture of the interview, Patty sought the help of the interviewer.

Over the period of interviews Patty mentioned that she did not read at home very much. She did indicate that sometimes she read "easy books" to her younger brothers and sisters, but "never read to self." She said that there were a few books at home for her to read, but that "I don't like to read." Patty elaborated further that neither her mother nor her father read to her but that her father did read "a lot of books on his own." During the classroom recreational reading periods, Patty sometimes pages through books looking at the pictures. Most of her recreational reading time was spent completing her math assignments, however. Patty worked very slowly on all academic tasks. Hence, Patty did little reading in books other than those specifically assigned in reading session or any of the content areas.

Patty acknowledged that the words she encountered during reading time helped her in social studies and science work. Yet, she was unable to explain how the questions Mr. Bell asked her in the reading discussions were of help when completing the social studies assignments. Patty did not actively participate in the fourth grade social studies group discussions. In fact, during the four months of observations, Patty responded only once to a question from Mr. Bell in the social studies discussion sessions. Also, Patty was not required to submit written answers to Mr. Bell's social studies question sheets, which were used as the basis of the discussion sessions. None of the fourth grade children was required to submit written answers. Consequently, the amount and quality of the social studies work Patty completed and understood was not often checked since she did not provide written answers to questions, almost never participated in the group discussions, and seldom sought help directly from Mr. Bell. The only check Mr. Bell employed in social studies, other than the discussion sessions, was an occasional test. He mentioned that Patty usually experienced difficulty on the tests and possessed only "minimal" understanding of what she had read and what was expected of her.

Matt's Perspective of Reading

When the observations for this study commenced, Matt was reading in a high fourth grade level text of the MacMillan R Reading Program. Matt indicated that at the beginning of the school year he had not met alone with Mr. Bell to discuss the assigned readings but that Paggy also met with them. He stated that Patty, "can't read well and was put into some other materials in another group." Matt identified Patty as having more trouble "with the words" than he did and that was why she was removed from his reading group. Although Matt's approaches, experiences, and level in reading were somewhat different from Patty's the end result was the same: He was unable to apply the skills of reading as he worked to complete his work in content area materials.

Matt defined reading as "understanding what I read." When asked what he meant by the term "understand" Matt stated, "being able to answer the questions Mr. Bell asked, to see if I learned a lot from the story and if I understood...read." One feature of

Matt's reading group session that was different from Patty's usual session with Mr. Bell was the fact that Matt was not asked to read orally as frequently as Patty was asked. Matt's reading group sessions revolved around a question-answer format. Yet, like Patty, Matt experienced difficulty providing appropriate answers to Mr. Bell's questions. Whenever Matt failed to understand the content of a story, Mr. Bell asked Matt to read from the text to locate and/or substantiate his answers.

Two characteristics of interest evolved from discussions with Matt about his reading. First, he expressed a dislike for reading books because "the titles don't tell what's in the book." His concern was that the titles on the covers of many books didn't explicitly represent the contents of the material inside the covers. Therefore, the method he employed to identify a good book was "to page the pictures." He stated that if he didn't like the pictures or the book contained no pictures he would not read the book. For Matt, the pictures had to appropriately represent or depict the book's title. For example when Matt expected a book to be about one subject and the pictures represented a different topic he refused to read the story. A second characteristic of Matt's view of reading was his statement that pictures in a book didn't help him understand the story. This assertion appeared to be a contradiction to his statement that he selected a book based on the pictures inside the book. He maintained that he didn't use the pictures to help him understand the story anyway.

Matt defined reading time as any time he had to read in the classroom. The procedures he employed to complete his reading assignments were similar to the procedures Patty used. First, Matt finished his workbook exercises before he read an assigned story. But, he seldom asked questions of Mr. Bell about how to complete a specific workbook exercise. When Matt was asked why Mr. Bell assigned the various workbook exercises Matt was unable to provide an answer. He stated, however, that the exercises were unrelated to the story he was to read from the basal text.

Matt did not read frequently during the recreational reading periods. Many of his mornings were spent in the school library looking from shelf to shelf but not selecting a book and sitting down to read it. Matt stated, however, that he read a book at home each night. He stated further that his parents didn't usually read to him but that his father did read "stories" at night. One aspect that Matt liked about Mr. Bell's classroom was the "story time." Story time was when Mr. Bell read from a library book to the children each day. This activity usually occurred for ten to fifteen minutes directly after the children's noon recess. Matt explained that he enjoyed listening to Mr. Bell read. He also indicated that the stories were usually very interesting.

Matt participated more actively in the fourth grade social studies discussion sessions than Patty. Yet, his contributions to the question-answer sessions were not very informative or productive. Frequently when Matt answered a question Mr. Bell was forced to select another child in the social studies group to assist Matt complete an appropriate answer. Matt tried to contribute answers but he often appeared to be confused. His question answering ability in social studies was similar to the ability he exhibited during the reading group sessions. In a comment about the pictures in the social studies text, Matt indicated that the pictures "kinda help with the story." He explained that he tried to use the pictures "to know" the people he read about.

Shawn's Perspective of Reading

Again as with the other non-appliers Shawn was assigned to a text level from the MacMillan R Reading Program. Each non-applier at the initiation of this study was reading in a text that had a readability level equal to at least one grade level below his/her actual grade level designation in Westside School. Shawn was reading in a low fifth grade level text.

Shawn's activities and understanding of reading instruction were different from Patty's and Matt's understandings. Shawn spent almost no time reading aloud to Mr. Bell during the reading group sessions. As a result, Shawn was not concerned with equating reading with the identification of words as Patty and Matt were.

Instead, Shawn described reading as knowing the main characters of a story and writing a summary of the story he had read. This appeared to be an appropriate conception for Shawn since a considerable amount of the time he spent in reading group sessions with Mr. Bell was devoted to answering detail and fact questions about the story content. Most of Mr. Bell's questions were concerned with having Shawn provide descriptions of the characters in the story. Questions were also asked about the climax of the story. After each discussion group Shawn was required to complete an "extra assignment." An extra assignment was work to be finished along with the workbook exercises and the reading of a basal text story. The extra assignments Shawn received varied from session to session. The primary foci of Shawn's assignments were to write a summary of a story in his own words and writing the climax of the story. Shawn pointed out that he was required to use his own words for each extra assignment because Mr. Bell did not accept sentences copied from the text as satisfying the objective of the assignment. Shawn stated that Mr. Bell required the writing of the story climax to "make sure we read the story." Mr. Bell indicated that Shawn had great difficulty identifying the appropriate climax and was usually unsuccessful in writing a summary. Mr. Bell claimed that that was why so much time during the reading discussion sessions was devoted to discussing the facts and details of a story.

Unlike Patty and Matt, Shawn spent a part of each reading period in the school library. Most often Shawn wandered among the bookshelves without selecting a book. But, when he did select a book and took the book back to the classroom he expended most of his time looking at the pictures and drawings in the book. In fact, Shawn was never observed to be reading the content of a library book he had selected. One aspect of Shawn's behavior that was of interest concerning the library books he selected was that frequently he showed the pictures from a book to Mr. Bell. On several occasions Shawn selected a book about racing cars. After he had looked at a few pictures he walked to the front table and showed the pictures to Mr. Bell. In such instances, Mr. Bell usually glanced at the picture and shook his head affirmatively. On a few occasions the two individuals exchanged conversation about the picture. Usually Shawn returned to his desk looking quite satisfied and continued to look at the other pictures. When asked about Shawn's progress in reading during the school year, Mr. Bell mentioned that Shawn was at least looking at books. At the beginning of the school year Shawn had avoided selecting books, even books just to look at.

Shawn claimed that he read at home each day. He was unsure about the amount of time he spent reading. "Yeah, about half an hour almost every day or maybe forty-five minutes or maybe an hour." He stated that the books at home for him to read were "a little hard sometimes." He identified the books as his dad's. He stated that his father read "a lot" but not to Shawn or the other children in the family. He claimed, however, that his father did read him one book, The Reluctant Dragon, " and then he wrote down questions and I had to answer them on my own time...."

Shawn's effort in social studies appeared to be "minimal" primarily because of his inability to read well and to verbalize his ideas of what he had read so the other members in his social studies group understood. During the social studies discussion sessions, Shawn always sat outside the discussion circle. He participated infrequently in the discussions. When the children in his social studies group were given assignments to complete, they usually formed smaller groups or teams to work together. Shawn frequently chose to work by himself, however. He explained that when watching a social studies filmstrip with captions the other fifth graders in his group read too fast for him to maintain an understanding of the content. Shawn was not able to keep pace with the other children and still understand the filmstrip's content. Consequently, Shawn talked about creating circumstances which allowed him to work by himself to complete the social studies assignments. Several times Shawn did not even attend the social studies discussion sessions because he was in the school library completing his assignments. Mr. Bell maintained that a child who had not completed the social studies assignments was not permitted to attend the social studies discussion session. Instead, the child was to complete the assignment in the confines of the school library. Shawn expressed the feeling that because he often worked alone and worked slowly he experienced little success in the social studies activities.

The Tacit Appliers

The second category of readers identified in Mr. Bell's classroom were the tacit appliers. Tacit appliers possessed three identifying characteristics as readers. First a tacit applier was incapable of naming a reading skill on his/her own, but when presented with several names of reading skills by the interviewer a tacit applier indicated he/she had heard of the skill before. Next, a tacit applier was unable to appropriately describe the content or define the meaning of a reading skill when presented with the name of the skill. Finally, a tacit applier was capable of using and applying the skills of reading with consistent regularity so as to complete reading as well as content area assignments. Seventeen children were identified as tacit appliers in Mr. Bell's classroom. The seventeen children comprised five independent reading groups with each group assigned to a different level text of the MacMillan R Reading Program. The text levels that the tacit appliers were using during this study encompassed a range from a low fifth grade level to a high sixth grade level (levels twenty-six to thirty-four).

A description of each tacit applier's perspective would be extremely time consuming and yield a large amount of repetitious information. Therefore, the reading perspectives of three representative members of the tacit appliers category of readers was selected to be described in detail. An attempt was made to select a tacit applier from each of three different text levels of the MacMillan Program.

Mr. Bell identified the reading progress of the tacit appliers in the following way: "I'm really pleased with the performance. I think a lot of them have learned to answer questions that involve some thinking...." All of the tacit appliers were reading in text levels that were above their actual grade levels. That is, all of the fourth grade tacit appliers were reading in a fifth or sixth grade level text. Also, all of the fifth grade tacit appliers were reading at a text level intended for use by sixth graders.

Andrea's Perspective of Reading

Andrea was a fourth grade child who was reading in a low fifth grade level text of the MacMillan R Reading Program. Andrea viewed a good reader as a person who "says it with expression." With this and other statements Andrea seemed to equate reading ability with oral reading efficiency. She mentioned that the person she considered to be the best reader in the class was the child who read with expression and "followed all the punctuation - periods, commas, you know." Andrea also said that knowing "the words to read the story" was important. She explained that knowing the meaning of the words helped her to read the story and to be able to answer the questions Mr. Bell asked about the story.

Andrea described the reading group sessions with Mr. Bell as times for Mr. Bell to ask questions about the story the children in the group read. She indicated that Mr. Bell asked a lot of questions and if one person in the group was unable to answer the question Mr. Bell asked another person. She understood Mr. Bell's objective in asking questions to be trying to get the children to understand what they had read.

Andrea talked about a vocabulary pretest, also. She described the pretest as an exercise in which "if you want to read the story you have to know the words." The vocabulary pretest was a workbook exercise in which the children matched underlined words in sentences to an appropriate meaning of the word provided by the author of the workbook. Andrea called these "tough words." She explained this to mean that "some (words) are hard to pronounce."

As regards other exercises in the workbook, Andrea indicated that the children in her reading group asked Mr. Bell a lot of questions about how to complete the various exercises "cause we don't understand." She also indicated that she didn't know why she was asked to complete the workbook pages. She expressed the opinion that the exercises "usually have nothing to do with the story." Yet, she stated that she "used knowledge (gained from the workbooks) on a [illegible]." Andrea explained that at the end of a reading text level Mr. Bell gave the group a test from the back pages of the workbook. She said she used the knowledge she had gained from completing the individual workbook exercises to answer the test questions. The tests pertained to specific reading skills but Andrea categorized the exercise as "gaining knowledge" not necessarily understanding reading skills.

During the observation period of this study, Andrea's reading group was assigned two different types of "extra assignments" at various times. Mr. Bell asked the children to complete the illustrations for two stories and to write the climax for another story. Andrea explained that the extra assignments were Mr. Bell's attempts "to see if we know what goes on in the story." She stated, "We do illustrations to see if you know what goes with the pictures." To complete the illustrations activity, the children select a sentence from the main text of the story to match or explain the picture which accompanies the text. Andrea indicated that in most of the reading she had completed she did not use the pictures in the stories to help her to gain an understanding of the meaning of the stories.

When Andrea finished her workbook assignments she usually began reading a library book at her desk. She explained that she usually read a book for writing a "language story." In order to complete her language assignments, Andrea read a book and then wrote a story about the story she had read. She explained she often wrote a story about one of the characters from the book. Andrea indicated, however, that she did not read much at home. She mentioned that her little sister (first grade) was beginning to read, but that she (Andrea) did not read with or to her sister.

Andrea's social studies activities were limited almost entirely to completing the questions Mr. Bell provided. During the social studies discussion sessions, Andrea participated but was usually not an active discussant. In fact, she responded only when called upon by Mr. Bell. Andrea indicated that she saw no relationship between the kinds of questions Mr. Bell asked in the reading discussion sessions and the questions he asked during the social studies sessions. She equated social studies with obtaining factual information about people. Reading time for Andrea was the time to understand the "climax or high point" of a story.

Gini's Perspective of Reading

Gini was a fourth grade child who was reading in a high fifth grade level text. She was one of four members of her reading group.

According to Gini, Mr. Bell assigned stories to read so that the children would "get the important parts or the high point of the story." Gini stated that Mr. Bell knew when a child understood the high point of a story by the way the questions were answered during the discussion session. Gini also indicated that Mr. Bell usually asked the children in the reading discussion group to "think of another name for the story" they had read and to write that name in their workbooks. In addition to the name, Gini mentioned that Mr. Bell asked each child to present verbally a reason for selecting his/her name or title. From this information Gini thought that Mr. Bell was capable of knowing whether or not each child had understood the story. Moreover, Gini maintained that Mr. Bell assigned the extra assignments to the reading group "to see if you understand what the high point is. What the story was talking about." From this description, identification of the climax or high point of a story was Gini's basic goal in reading.

Another aspect of reading instruction that concerned Gini was vocabulary. The vocabulary pretests Mr. Bell assigned from the workbooks were "pages given to help you understand the vocabulary.

If you don't understand (the words) in the story go back here (workbooks) and read it." Gini maintained that "understanding concepts" was important to her reading. Gini, also, used the pictures in the stories "to help understand the story." In conjunction with this statement, Gini stated that she often "forms images" while she read to help her with the content of a story even though "the author's pictures and my pictures would be different."

Unlike the other children in her reading group Gini did not complete her workbook assignments before she read the assigned story. She stated that she read the story first "because the workbook is dependent on the story sometimes." Gini was the only tacit applier interviewed who acknowledged that a connection between reading the story and completing the workbook existed. In fact, Gini claimed that she read each story two times - "the second time to look for important parts" - before beginning her workbook assignments. The second time she skimmed the story. But, she expressed that she needed to read the story twice in order to be able to answer Mr. Bell's questions during discussion and to be capable of completing the workbook exercises.

In social studies discussion sessions, Gini was an active discussant. She actively sought to answer Mr. Bell's questions and worked hard to prepare appropriate written answers. Gini arrived at each social studies discussion session well prepared to participate. Gini expressed that "things in reading were similar to social studies." What she meant was that the types of questions and the discussion format Mr. Bell provided during the reading discussion sessions were very much like the questions and format he established in social studies. Gini indicated that what she learned in reading she used in both language arts and social studies. For example, she stated that the knowledge she obtained in reading about suffixes she used in writing her stories in language arts. Likewise, she made comparisons of various story characters in reading and she employed the same technique in making comparisons of the people she studied in social studies. Gini also made a parallel comparison related to the way Mr. Bell assigned report card grades in reading and social studies to each child. Gini explained that the grades were based on each child submitting completed assignments on time. Children who consistently failed to submit papers on time received lower grades from Mr. Bell according to Gini. Gini said she tried to submit all of her work to Mr. Bell on time.

Laura's Perspective of Reading

Laura was a fifth greade child who was reading in a high sixth grade level text of the MacMillan R Reading Program. The reading group of which Laura was a member was composed of a total of three members. This group of tacit appliers performed in reading very much like the appliers group members with the exception that each child in Laura's group had difficulty defining or describing the content of the various reading skills. The children were capable of naming specific skills but were not able to accurately tell about the skills they named. The perspectives of the members of Laura's group appeared to be more sophisticated and more developed than the perspectives of the other tacit appliers.

When asked to define reading, Laura mentioned two characteristics of reading that were different from the definitions expressed by the tacit appliers in other reading groups. First, Laura stated that reading involved the creation of moods between a story's author and the reader. Other members in Laura's group substantiated her position by citing the fact that Mr. Bell often asked the children "to tell the mood of the characters" as situations developed within a story. For example, "We read a cockrobin story, and the cockrobin died and we talked about the feelings of the town...in the story." The second aspect Laura mentioned was the fact that Mr. Bell encouraged her and the other members of her reading group to express their "own feelings" about the content of a story. In addition to these two aspects of reading, Laura stated that Mr. Bell's purpose in asking questions was to assist the children to understand the content of a story. She also thought Mr. Bell asked questions "to see who didn't read the story."

Laura expressed the view that the "things in reading are similar to social studies." With this statement Laura identified the kinds of questions, the discussions and workbook exercises she experienced in reading instruction as the same types of activities she had during social studies instruction. For example, the reading group participated in two or three reading discussions each week and "social studies has questions." Laura stated that the new assignments in social studies "are in really big packets." A packet consisted of several pages of questions, maps and charts the children were to complete. Laura pointed out that the types of questions Mr. Bell asked in reading he also asked in social studies. Yet, the content of the two subjects was usually very different. She stated, however, "we dicsuss more things for reading." Laura presented a comparison between Mr. Bell's questions and the questions her social studies group was assigned from the social studies text. "Well the book question has like really dull words, well they're more sophisticated and the ones Mr. Bell has aren't very sophisticated." When asked to explain this statement Laura said, "Well he (Mr. Bell) doesn't use very big words and they don't have...really big meanings." She indicated that Mr. Bell's questions were "easier."

Another point addressed by Laura was that in both reading and social studies Mr. Bell encouraged each child to substantiate a statement he/she had made or a position he/she had taken. Laura cited the time when she disagreed with Josh about a statement he had made in social studies discussion group. At that time, Mr. Bell asked Laura and Josh to provide information to support the argument each child was advancing. Laura said she got her social studies book and read the information and won the argument.

The Appliers

The third category of reader identified in Mr. Bell's classroom were the appliers. An applier was defined as an individual who indentified reading skills, defined and/or described the skills, used the reading skills to complete assignments, and applied the skills independently when reading materials for pleasure. Six children were categorized as appliers. Each applier belonged to the Yearling reading group. Five of the appliers were fifth graders and one child, Monica, was a fourth grader.

Since the beginning of the school year, the Yearling Group members were assigned to read various library books for the reading group discussion sessions. As previously described the members read and discussed the books together. Some of the books read were: The Yearling; Caddie Woodlawn; and The Bully of Barkum Street.

Mr. Bell stated that all members of the Yearling Group were "reading well above grade level when they came into my room." He added, "I think of all the kids I've had in this group (Yearling

Group), I feel very comfortable that they've progressed and not stayed the same or gone down." The only objective way Mr. Bell measured the progress of the Yearling Group members was by administering a test on the content of each book. The test was given after all the reading and discussion for a specific book was completed. This measure of progress was unlike that used with members of other reading groups, however. When the members of other reading groups completed one level of the basal text program they were assigned to the next higher level text of the program. The MacMillan R Reading Program is based on a continuous progress model in which the stories in the next higher level text are written at a more difficult readability level (Smith & Wardhaugh, 1975). Mr. Bell's selection of library books for the Yearling Group was not based on any formal or organized system of measuring readability. Therefore, an objective and systematic measure of reading progress for the Yearling Group members was not undertaken. Reading progress for the Yearling Group members was based primarily on Mr. Bell's subjective observations.

The reading perspectives of three of the six appliers are presented below. The perspectives of Josh, Paul and Heather were selected because they appear to be representative of all the appliers. The perspectives of the appliers are different from the perspective of the other two categories of readers.

Josh's Perspective of Reading

Josh defined reading as "comprehension and knowing how to find out things and thinking creatively." Josh viewed reading as "you don't have to have one right answer." He stated that Mr. Bell never talked about reading skills, but that Mr. Bell taught reading skills so the children in the Yearling Group would be "...able to read books...be able to pronounce certain words." He added that reading skills were taught "for the comprehension and so you understand...life." Josh elaborated on this by stating that he "used comprehension skills in social studies" even though he mentioned that in social studies "you memorize facts."

When Josh was asked to identify and explain a comprehension skill he used in reading and social studies he said that Mr. Bell asked him to "make a comparison between Jodi and Penny." Jodi and Penny were two of the main characters in The Yearling. Josh explained that making a comparison was "selecting facts about each person that were alike." He added that in social studies "we make comparisons about how the colonists lived in the New World and how they lived in England." When he was asked to define and describe another reading skill Josh stated that putting things in sequence was "telling the order in which things happen." Josh proceeded to list several events from The Yearling in the order that they apparently occurred in the story.

According to Josh, "People not in the Yearling (Group) didn't pass the tests" that were given at the beginning of the school year by Mr. Bell. Josh said that the children in the Yearling Group were "not necessarily better at reading but we read a little more complicated things." Josh explained his statement to mean that "we read things that have words that the other people might never of heard before." Another point Josh made was that the Yearling Group members "read a variety of books." Different books were read "cause they're good books and they were interesting stories." Josh claimed further that Mr. Bell asked the Yearling Group members to read the library books "because he thought that those reader books (basal reader texts) are too easy for us." Josh added, "The stories might be good for us but the workbook stuff would be too easy for us." When asked to clarify this statement Josh responded, "Cause we essentially knew everything in the workbook." Josh maintained that "reading things you like is important in order to perform well."

The freedom and responsibility Mr. Bell supported in his classroom was appreciated by Josh. When asked to explain how Mr. Bell assigned report card grades in reading Josh said the grades depended on "getting stuff (assignments) in on time and how well you express your feelings." Josh stated that "if you goof-off" Mr. Bell took away the freedom. Josh indicated Mr. Bell was "strict" with regard to assignments being submitted on time.

Josh was an active and verbal participant in the social studies discussion group. He freely expressed his feelings about the topics under discussion even though he was not always accurate in his statement of the facts. He appeared to base many of his proclamations upon opinion. Several times during the observation period Josh was forced by other classmates to withdraw his arguments because he had relied too heavily upon his opinions and had not properly assimilated the facts from his reading. Some children readily accepted Josh's declarations during the social studies discussion sessions, but most members of the Yearling reading group challenged Josh to support what he said.

Heather's Perspective of Reading

Heather maintained that one of the reasons Mr. Bell had the Yearling Group read books "was for reading skills." She said the reading skills "help you read better and like practice makes perfect." According to Heather, a good reader was "if you read out loud and if you understand what you're reading...better with meanings of words...." When asked what reading skills she learned Heather mentioned "the mood of a story, ...vocabulary, how the author feels." She also acknowledged that reading a story helped to develop the reader's feelings. For example, Heather expressed the thought that Mr. Bell encouraged the Yearling Group members to tell how they felt when Jodi killed Flag in The Yearling. She claimed that knowing the mood of a story was important "to help you understand the story better." Heather explained "but some books if you read 'em you can't understand what they're trying to make you feel." She added, "Well in certain books like The Yearling just the words help you feel what's going to happen next." She stated that the author of The Yearling was trying to make the reader feel "mostly sad and angry." Heather also mentioned that Mr. Bell often required the Yearling Group members to make comparisons of different incidents in the book. The example Heather stated for illustrating the making of comparisons was to tell how Jodi felt after he killed Flag and then what was his feeling when the rattler bit Penny.

In describing her social studies activities Heather explained that the work she completed was similar to the questions she worked to answer in reading. She stated that in social studies "the questions are mainly looking for facts...but you have to read carefully and think about what you're reading so that you can find the answers." Heather maintained that during the reading discussion sessions the tasks were identical.

Heather was not an active participant in the social studies discussion sessions, but she worked hard to compile answers to the questions Mr. Bell provided in the social studies packets of materials. When Mr. Bell directed questions to Heather she responded with appropriate answers. Although Heather expressed disappointment that Mr. Bell did not collect the completed social studies questions "to see how good I did," she expressed the knowledge that if she had not finished the questions she would not have participated in the social studies discussion sessions. She knew Mr. Bell did not check the written answers but she was aware that he checked to see which students participated in the discussions.

Paul's Perspective of Reading

Paul stated that "reading gives you better skills." He explained this statement to mean that through reading different books "reading comprehension...understanding the words and ideas of the story" are developed. Main idea was one skill Paul discussed. He defined the main idea as "it's like what mainly happens in the chapter." His concern was not with explaining one main idea in a story or book but with the notion that each chapter in a book might contain a main idea. He added, "Not every chapter has one. Some chapters kinda like have the main idea carried on from a different chapter." Another skill Paul mentioned was the development of a character personality in a book. He stated, "After we read the end of the book we're going to have to tell how the main characters have changed since the beginning." He explained that this task helped him to "understand the story better."

Paul liked the reading discussion sessions. He stated several reasons for liking the discussions. First, he liked to learn from other members in his group. He stated, "if you hear what they think or what a scene looked like to them you can sometimes get a better image so you have a better picture in your mind about what was going on." He added, "because you get different people's opinions and you know what other people feel. You get to know how they feel...you get to know a person that way sometimes." Paul explained that discussing a point in a story often "helps others to see the answer." Next, Paul liked the discussion sessions because Mr. Bell's questions "make you think about what you've read...and helps you to get a better understanding of the whole story." Mr. Bell's questions helped Paul to understand the content of the story. Paul claimed the "questions helped in reading comprehension." Finally, Paul liked the reading group discussion sessions because "you get different titles so you know what is good...when you thought they were really bad or not that interesting."

Paul maintained that Mr. Bell asked questions during the reading discussion sessions for two reasons. First, Mr. Bell asked questions as "kind of a check on if you read it (story)." Paul indicated that the questions were the only way Mr. Bell knew which children were reading and understanding the assignment and which children were not completing their work. The second reason Mr. Bell asked questions, according to Paul, was to ascertain "what you feel about things." Paul explained that the answers the children provided to Mr. Bell's questions "helps him (Mr. Bell) understand how you feel and it helps him understand us."

As regards social studies instruction, Paul stated that Mr. Bell's questions "help me understand because the questions make you think more about what you've read so you sometimes go back and read it again and you get more understanding." When asked where he got his answers to the questions Paul explained "mainly you can get the answers from just thinking about common sense and from what we have read in other things."

The above descriptions of the perspectives of individual children in each category of reader hopefully has provided the reader with insight about how children view and understand what transpires during reading group discussions. With these insights and the knowledge acquired from the preceding chapters, the task in the next chapter is to make some concluding remarks about the reading instruction as it occurred in Mr. Bell's classroom at Westside School. Also in the next chapter some limitations of this study are stated. Finally, recommendations for future research in the areas of reading skill instruction, organizational planning and children's perspectives of reading instruction are presented.

CHAPTER VII

LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The objective of this chapter is to present some of the limitations and conclusions of this study. In addition to the limitations and conclusions, a discussion of implications for future research as regards the observations and descriptions of this particular study are provided. Before presenting these discussions, however, a summary of the study is presented.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to discover the cultural knowledge the inhabitants in one elementary school classroom had about reading and reading instruction. To be more specific, the intent was to discover the beliefs, ideas, and actions, the cultural knowledge, the inhabitants had about the acquisition of reading comprehension skills during reading instruction and the application of those reading skills during social studies instruction.

This study was conducted in a small city of a Midwestern state. The elementary school in which the study took place is located in a "middle and upper-middle class" neighborhood on the west side of the city. The study was conducted in one self-contained classroom where one male teacher and twenty-six fourth/fifth grade children interacted.

This study was an ethnographic inquiry in which the techniques of observation and interviewing were used to gather information about the knowledge the inhabitants possessed. Daily observations of reading instruction were conducted over a four month period. Besides the observations, interviews were conducted with the inhabitants in the classroom. Three interviews were conducted with the classroom teacher and the school principal was interviewed once. Individual interviews were conducted with twenty of the twenty-six children. Several of the children were interviewed more than once creating a total of thirty-seven interviews. An interview with each child was conducted directly after the child had received instruction in his/her reading discussion session with the classroom teacher. The content of a child's interview focused on the beliefs, ideas, and actions the child had about reading and social studies instruction. Moreover, a child's understanding of other classroom activities and transactions occurring during the reading and social studies instructional periods were also obtained.

The focus of the daily observations was on the reading group discussion sessions that the teacher conducted with each of the nine reading groups he had established in his classroom. Eight of the reading groups were reading from texts of the MacMillan R Reading Program. The remaining group was reading from a library book, *The Yearling*. In addition to the direct observation of the reading groups, each of the thirty-nine reading group sessions that were observed, were also tape recorded. Social studies instruction, as it occurred during the four month period, was also observed and recorded.

The purpose of the interviews was to obtain information so as to discover and develop an understanding of the perspectives of reading and reading instruction of the classroom inhabitants. Mr. Bell, the classroom teacher, had developed a perspective which revolved around the use of discussion of story content to teach reading comprehension skills that he deemed important for life-long reading. Although he used the MacMillan R Reading Program texts to deliver instruction he developed his own set of comprehension skills for the children to learn. The skills Mr. Bell taught were: (a) getting the main idea; (b) drawing inferences; (c) making comparisons; (d) placing facts and events in sequence; (e) identifying and describing the traits of story characters; (f) understanding the theme of the story; (g) identifying the mood; (h) recognizing the climax, and (i) thinking critically. The questions Mr. Bell asked during the discussion sessions focused on teaching and learning these skills.

In addition to teaching the reading skills, Mr. Bell organized his social studies instruction around the practice and application of reading skills. Like the reading discussion sessions Mr. Bell also conducted social studies discussion sessions in which questions emphasizing the use of the reading skills were asked.

Mr. Bell also focused his attention on organizing and managing his classroom. He initiated several grouping plans for children. One grouping plan was established for classroom seating. Another grouping plan was developed for instruction using a centers approach to teaching and within that plan two separate social studies groups existed which were based on the grade levels of the children. A third grouping plan was implemented for the various reading levels of the children to receive reading instruction. Mr. Bell was identified as an organizer-manager of instruction and not as a teacher in the traditional sense of the term.

Finally, the children's perspective of reading and reading instruction and social studies was obtained. Three categories of readers were identified: appliers; tacit appliers, and non-appliers. The non-appliers were children who were unable to name, describe, and apply the reading skills. Three non-appliers were identified in Mr. Bell's classroom. The tacit appliers were children who could not name or define a reading skill but who were capable of applying the skills during reading instruction as well as during social studies instruction. The appliers, six children in the classroom, the third category of readers, were capable of naming, defining, and applying the reading skills. The perspectives of children from each category of reader were obtained and described.

Limitations

Every study has limitations and this study is no exception The limitations that are cited here apply to the procedural aspects of this study. In particular, the limitations are all related to or associated with the concept of time. No attempt is made to discuss all the limitations that are inherent in the selection of the paradigmatic model of qualitative research in general and ethnography in particular. This is neither the time nor the place to embark on a philosophical disucssion or defense of one model of research over another. The investigator is cognizant that limitations exist in whatever methodology one selects to conduct a study. The investigator acknowledges that limitations of a general nature do exist in the qualitative model. The intent of this section, then, is to present specific limitations of this study.

As already mentioned, the limitations of this study appear to be related to the time parameter. First, the fact that the study was conducted in early March to early June was problematic in relation to understanding the formation of the children's perspectives. The investigator cannot account for the influence of the classroom upon the formation of the children's perspective. For example, there is no way to ascertain the influence Mr. Bell had upon the appliers and their notion of reading skills. Ideally, this study would have been strengthened by being conducted from the beginning of the school year and carried on throughout the school year.

Second, the observation period of four months was a limitation. This was so for several reasons. Although a total of thirty-seven interviews were conducted, thirty-three with the children, only twenty of the children in the classroom were interviewed. Six children were never interviewed even though they were observed in the reading group discussions. Eight children out of the twenty children interviewed were interviewed more than once. In several instances, more time to verify statements of children who were interviewed early in the observational period would have been helpful. Several questions about the children's perspective that were raised later in the study could not be verified beyond one or two individuals within a specific category of reader.

In addition to questions raised about the children's perspective, questions about the activities of some reading groups were also raised but were not verified because insufficient time was available to observe the reading groups in discussion sessions with the teacher. Two factors realtive to time were evident here. First, three of the reading groups were observed in their discussion sessions less than a total of thirty minutes over the fifty days of observation. Each group met for more than a total of thirty minutes over the four month period of observations, but the observer was often interviewing individuals from other reading groups at the time these particular groups were meeting. Second, interviews with the children in the groups with the least amount of observed discussion time were interviewed a fewer number of times. Even though reading discussion groups were observed for a total of thrity-nine sessions a greater period of time for this study would have allowed more observations of the reading discussion sessions.

A final limitation related to the concept of time was the limited number of teacher interviews that were conducted. A longer period of classroom observation would have permitted more opportunity to discuss classroom transactions with the teacher.

Analysis and Interpretation

As regards this ethnographic study, the primary purpose of the study was to discover and understand the cultural knowledge the classroom inhabitants possessed about reading and reading instruction. A secondary purpose of the study was to identify and describe some of the contextual factors which influenced the teaching and learning of reading in one elementary school classroom. In the process of describing and examining the data from the observations and interviews conducted for this study, interpretations of the data were ongoing and presented as an integral part of the descriptions. In relation to this activity, Geertz (1973) states, "that what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to.... Right down to the factual base...we are already explicating..." (p. 9). In addition to this position, Geertz also claims that regardless of how naive or objective an investigator attempts to be, he/she still brings to a situation certain notions, expectations, or preconceptions of the culture which he/she is observing. By denying or camouflaging the existence of such notions, the investigator's observations and understanding of the culture would be biased and discredited. In this study, an attempt was made to maintain an objective outlook when obtaining the data about the inhabitants' knowledge of reading and reading instruction even though the investigator's background and knowledge of reading and reading instruction was highly developed. Although specific segments of this paper were not identified as interpretative in nature, the reader must acknowledge that the presentation of the data, that is the investigator's selection of what is presented and discussed, is in fact the investigator's initial interpretation of the inhabitants' cultural knowledge. Geertz (1973) elaborates further on this topic by adding that "anthropological writings are themselves interpretations...ethnography is thick description. What the ethnographer is in fact faced with...is a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which he must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render" (p. 10).

Wolcott (1971), however, states that individuals doing ethnography in school settings in which they have been a "former inmate" or in which they have a vested interest as a "zealous reformer" must use caution in rendering interpretations, stating opinions, or making suggestions for improvements in the school situation. In addition to his own remarks, Wolcott cites Spindler (1955, p. 20), "The anthropologist's experience with small and relatively integrated societies sometimes gives him an extraordinary naivete about the complex relations in our own society.... He fails to see complications and looks for integrating features, consistencies, and values where there are none. And as a consequence he may make outlandish pronouncements as to what educators should or should not do." Heeding this advice and precaution, thick descriptions were rendered in this paper. In addition to the descriptions, specific categories of readers were identified to characterize the investigator's understanding of the inhabitants' beliefs, ideas, and actions. Keeping in mind the precautions suggested by Wolcott and Spindler, but attempting to delineate further the investigator's understanding of the beliefs, ideas, and actions of the inhabitants relative to reading and reading instruction within the classroom, "cognitive principles' and "cultural themes"[3] are presented in this section.

A cognitive principle is "something people believe as true and valid; it is a common assumption about the nature of their experience" (Spradley, 1979, p. 186). A cognitive principle usually takes the form of an assertion. An assertion may be of two types.

First, an assertion may be very specific such as when Patty defined reading as "reading out loud." In this instance, the assertion was limited in its application to a single member of a single domain.[4] Second, an assertion may focus on a "universal experience." That is, the assertion has a high degree of generality. For example, Paul made the assertion that "reading is comprehension." This assertion was understood by the members of several reading groups and the classroom teacher. That is, the children from the tacit appliers and the children from the appliers categories of readers along with the classroom teacher viewed reading as comprehension. A cognitive principle then is knowledge or understanding one individual or the knowledge or understanding that several individuals from various domains, within a culture, hold about a specific aspect of their culture. The cognitive principle is the basis upon which the inhabitants of a culture learn, function, and interact.

Bellack (1973), in a presentation describing the use of interpretative studies in education, presents two concepts which are very similar to the notion of cognitive principles. Bellack refers to Kaplan's concepts of "act meaning" and "action meaning." An act meaning is the meaning an act or behavior has for the actor. That is, an investigator must describe or explain what "conduct a particular piece of behavior represents" (p. 33). Then, an investigator must interpret the meaning of the action and determine its interconnections with other actions or circumstances. This Bellack states is what Kaplan refers to as action meaning.

The remainder of this section is devoted to a delineation of some act meanings, behaviors, and action meaning, the investigator's interpretation of the behaviors which were apparent in Mr. Bell's classroom regarding the inhabitant's cultural knowledge of reading and reading instruction. For ease of presentation, the behaviors and interpretations of the behaviors are divided into two categories. The first category is concerned with meanings which appear to be associated primarily with teaching, while the second category of meanings is concerned with the teacher's and the children's notions of learning. Although a line of demarcation has been drawn between the meanings associated with teaching and learning, this demarcation is created solely for the purpose of discussion. To facilitate the presentation further, a general statement of the act meaning or belief of the actor is identified followed by an example illustrating the actors' beliefs. The depicition of the actors' beliefs is then followed by the investigator's interpretation as regards the significance of the actors' behaviors.

Act Meanings and Action Meanings Associated with Teaching

1. Efficiency of classroom management is an underlying concern as regards teaching. Mr. Bell believed efficiency of effort to be a crucial aspect of his teaching, organization, and management. That is: (a) selecting the appropriate group composition; (b) using

suitable materials; (c) eliminating communication between the children and the teacher through the use of the cubby-holes; (d) focusing on specific reading skills in both reading and social studies instruction; and (e) scheduling each day the center groups and planning the rotation of those groups, were undertaken to achieve, in a direct manner, the goals of the adopted school curriculum. These procedures were viewed by Mr. Bell as being highly organized and essential for his management of not only the children but also the management of the materials in the various content areas. Mr. Bell's attitude toward the concept and the effort related to efficiency appeared to reflect his view of the demands placed on him to guide the children through the various content materials. These demands emanated from the school administration and from the ideas expressed by Mr. Bell's faculty peers. As a result of his emphasis on efficiency of effort, children's questions about specific content concepts were often unanswered, and children experiencing difficulties with learning concepts often were not provided sufficient time to complete the tasks at an initial sitting. Although Mr. Bell's emphasis on efficiency of managing materials and time appears to be a limiting factor in his relationship with the children, this was not necessarily the case. During the course of the study, it was observed that Mr. Bell was very personable, considerate, and caring with the children in his classroom. He provided the children with a very humane learning environment and experience.

2. Reading instruction is based on the children's demonstrated ability. Instruction which was either too easy or too difficult was of limited value to the children. In this regard, Mr. Bell believed and devised plans at the beginning of the school year to see that the children in his classroom received reading instruction at their appropriate reading levels. As previously mentioned, Mr. Bell interviewed each child about what he/she had read during the initial three weeks of school. Next, he provided skill tests to determine the appropriate MacMillan text level for each child. Finally, he employed the recommendations from the previous year's teachers' for each child to aid him in determining the appropriate reading level. A paradox exists here, however, as regards this practice and subsequent instructional practices employed by Mr. Bell concerning the assignment of the children to text levels and keeping the children in those text levels for the entire observational period of this study. That is, when a child was assigned to a text level, he/she either remained in that level or advanced at a pace relative to the other children in the class. Mr. Bell did not account for a child's achievement or growth in ability other than through the normal advancement of the child through a grade. The development of this paradox is due partially to the materials employed to deliver instruction and partially to the reluctance of the teacher to implement fully the belief he held. The problem with the materials is that teachers are instructed both by the textbook publishers and by their undergraduate instructors in college

degree programs that the text levels are based upon a progression of difficulty. Therefore, many teachers assume that to skip a particular text level would inhibit the children's growth. That is, the children would miss "valuable" instruction in specific skills if a particular text level within the progression of materials was skipped. Part of Mr. Bell's reluctance to have children skip text levels emanated from his concept of efficiency of effort. At the time of this study, Mr. Bell had organized nine reading groups, and he expended great energies to meet with these groups. He explained that one more reading group would create for him an unmanageable situation and could have caused his entire system of reading management to topple. Mr. Bell's approach to individualized instruction, believing that children of similar needs could be grouped together for instruction, was realistic. He expressed concern, however, that it was nearly impossible for a teacher to provide one on one instruction to each child day in and day out. Therefore, Mr. Bell established the practice of moving a group of children from text level to text level in a relative fashion.

3. The children need to develop independence and responsibility for their own learning and actions. Several procedures employed by Mr. Bell illustrated the importance of this belief. For example, Mr. Bell provided the children with the opportunity to select the order in which they completed their assigned work. He allowed the children the chance to select their own reading materials for their free reading time. For language arts instruction, general topics

were selected by Mr. Bell, but the children selected the reading material to read to meet the assigned obligations. Mr. Bell permitted the children to engage in quiet discussions at their desks without being scolded. Limits as regards duration of talking were established so that others would not be disturbed, but the children exercised their independence to decide when or when not to talk with a neighboring child. Mr. Bell verbalized the need for children to seek independence, and he provided the children with limited opportunities to attain their independence. In reality, however, the children were organized in such a manner that their choices of whether or not to read or complete an assigned task or talk to a neighbor were minimal. Again, Mr. Bell had created a contradiction as regards his words and deeds. Two aspects of Mr. Bell's behavior exemplify this contradiction. The first was his strict use of the reading materials in that he directed the children to read each text story in the progression recommended by the text publishers and to complete all of the workbook pages or, in the case of social studies, to complete all the study questions regardless of the importance of the activity to the children's learning. The second behavior to exemplify this contradiction was Mr. Bell's adherence to the time schedules that he constructed each school day. The children realized that if they "goofed-off" they would not complete their assigned tasks and might, therefore, possibly lose opportunities given to those children who completed their tasks on time.

4. The children did not need directed reading instruction each school day. Mr. Bell did not meet with each reading group each day. Most reading groups met two or three times per week, while one reading group met only once per week. Mr. Bell's acceptance of this belief was the result of the organizational structure he employed of having nine reading groups. In practice, to meet each group during the course of the reading time each day would have been nearly impossible. As a consequence of accepting this belief, the investigator identified several trusts and situations which Mr. Bell developed. First, Mr. Bell exhibited confidence that the children would practice and apply the reading skills he discussed in the reading sessions without his direct supervision as a teacher. His method of checking the children's ability to apply the skills was during the reading discussion sessions. Next, since reading instruction was geared to the completion of the workbook skill assignments, many of which the children appeared able to complete without instruction, little expository teaching took place during the reading instructional time. That is, Mr. Bell was infrequently called upon, by the children, to explain or demonstrate how to use a reading skill. In most instances, the children could complete the skill assignments first by only having the directions read to them, and second the children completed the assignments without reading the text story upon which the skill assignments were supposedly based. Evidently, most of the children were completing tasks they were already capable of doing. Finally, reading group

sessions were not necessary each day because the progress each child was making, except for the children identified in this study as non-appliers, was steady and above grade level. Since all the tacit appliers and the appliers were identified by Mr. Bell as reading well above their assigned grade levels, based on the Mac Millan R Reading Program text levels, and still meeting only once or twice per week, the need was not present for the children to meet more frequently. Mr. Bell expressed that he felt justified in organizing instruction in this way because the children were capable of reading content materials such as library books which were equal to or above the readability levels of the MacMillan texts.

5. Reading skills are the basis of social studies instruction. Mr. Bell indicated during the interviews and through his instructional practices his belief that the comprehension skills he taught during reading instruction were the same skills which formed the basis of his social studies instruction. In fact, the reading and social studies discussion sessions were focused upon the same types of questioning. The support for this belief was situated in two of Mr. Bell's actions. First, in his view, the ultimate goal of teaching reading is to engender in children a desire to be life-long readers. He realized that the skills taught in reading were important for the children to learn and apply in the every day materials they would use as adults. Consequently, he established a practice in which the skills of reading were presented, practiced, and applied during reading and social studies instruction. The

second item of support for the application of this belief was Mr. Bell's view that the quality and diversity of the questions provided in both the reading and social studies materials was insufficient. For example, most of the social studies text questions were literal recall questions which did not require the children to incorporate their experiences as human beings into the subject matter they were studying. That is, the social studies text questions failed to provide the children with the qunatity of practice and application of reading comprehension skills that Mr. Bell visualized as being adequate. Therefore, he made a concerted effort to develop questions during both reading and social studies instruction which focused on the reading skills he deemed important for the children to learn and practice.

Act Meanings and Action Meanings Associated with Learning

1. Reading is comprehension. Many of the children, appliers and tacit appliers, and Mr. Bell believed reading to be comprehension. They listed as reading skills such skills as finding the main idea, making evaluations, and determining sequence as the content of reading and reading instruction. The basis for the children's awareness of this belief was the reading discussion sessions. The tacit appliers and appliers spent the majority of their actual reading discussions focusing on comprehension or understanding the content and implications of the stories they had read. Factual questions were asked, but a majority of Mr. Bell's questions focused on

higher level questions of comprehension such as making comparisons. Likewise, in the social studies discussions and activities, the children were expected not only to apply their factual knowledge of social studies content but also to use their understandings of the historical and social significance of the concepts and content to solve problems and to explore and identify other factors of social importance. The process of employing higher order comprehension questions in the children's presentation and discussion of the individual book reports, presented every other week or so, were also valuable to reinforce the notion that reading was not just the calling out of words but the assimilation and use of ideas. Through these assignments and activities, the children came to realize Mr. Bell's goals of reading and reading instruction and to ascribe meaning and importance to his goals.

2. Reading is reading aloud. The non-appliers believed reading to be the ability to read aloud. The non-appliers associated reading aloud with the ability to read well. The practice the non-appliers engaged in during their reading group discussions directly emphasized the importance of reading aloud. That is, they were frequently requested to read aloud to demonstrate their understanding of the story they had read. The non-appliers recognized this activity as an evaluation of their understanding of the story content. Therefore, the fact that the non-appliers view of reading was significantly different from the view held by many of the tacit

appliers was not suprising. The view the non-appliers held was, in fact, consonant with the practices in which they participated with Mr. Bell during the reading discussion sessions. This belief was reinforced for the non-appliers as a consequence of the next belief which Mr. Bell subscribed to relative to working with the children who experienced difficulty in reading and applying the skills of reading in social studies and other content areas.

3. Non-appliers tend to comprehend better when they read orally than when they read silently. This was the basis upon which Mr. Bell guided the non-appliers through their reading materials. For example, Mr. Bell claimed that a child who was having a problem acquiring the intent of a passage would often overcome this difficulty when he/she read the passage aloud. Because he identified the non-appliers as being marginal comprehenders, barely able to acquire the facts of a story, he insisted that these children read aloud so he could "help" them obtain the meaning of the story. Consequently, the questions he asked the non-appliers during their discussion sessions were directly dependent upon the oral reading the non-appliers performed for Mr. Bell. These questions were basically literal recall questions, however. A paradox as regards Mr. Bell's understanding and practices of reading instruction exist here. The following example illustrates this paradox. Patty, the child experiencing the most difficulty reading, invariably read aloud during her sessions with Mr. Bell. In fact, she participated

very little in any sort of discussions with Mr. Bell. Her understanding of what she read orally, based upon the transcriptions of the questions Mr. Bell asked her and the responses she made in an attempt to correctly answer the questions, was poor at best. Patty was simply, in a majority of instances, unable to provide correct responses to Mr. Bell's questions. Reading aloud did not appear to improve Patty's ability to understand the story content. Therefore, Mr. Bell's adherence to this belief of oral reading in the case of non-appliers is questionable.

4. Workbook exercises do not help readers to understand a story or to acquire reading skills. The children placed little importance in the exercises they completed from the workbooks. They did place importance on having read the assigned story so as to be capable of participating in the reading sessions. The children understood that they learned reading skills from the reading sessions with Mr. Bell. The children ascribed little importance to the completion of the workbook pages for two reasons. First, they knew that Mr. Bell did not outwardly place significant value upon the content of the workbook exercises. He demonstrated his contempt for the workbook pages in several ways. He did not review the pages the children had completed, at any time. Also, although he took the time to provide the children with directions on how to complete each of the exercises, he did not, in most instances, explain or provide examples to illustrate to the children what was expected of them in order to do the exercises. In

addition, to these two factors, Mr. Bell did not provide instruction to a child if he/she failed to accomplish the intended goal of a workbook exercise. In fact, at no time during the study were the exercises discussed in the classroom after the children made an attempt to correctly complete them. Each of these factors provided the children with an awareness that the successful completion of the workbook pages was not a priority in Mr. Bell's scheme of reading activities. A second reason the children placed little value in the workbook pages was that they knew they could complete the exercises without even reading the story on which the exercises were supposedly based. As previously mentioned in this study, only one child who was interviewed admitted that she read the assigned story before she attempted to work on the accompanying workbook pages. All of the other children claimed that they completed the workbook pages prior to reading the assigned story. These two reasons alone made the children aware of the "busywork" nature of the workbooks and the limited value the workbooks had in providing fruitful reading instruction.

Implications for Further Research

The observations and descriptions from this study offer fertile ideas for future research in several areas of classroom reading instructional procedures and practices. One of the most significant aspects of this study was the inclusion of the children's perspective of reading and reading instruction. For too long, investigators have neglected the views of children beyond looking at the achievement levels they attained after instruction. Much information can be gathered and needs to be obtained about the children's knowledge and understanding of the processes and procedures of teaching and learning to read. Children need to be observed and questioned as they work and learn in an educational setting during reading instruction.

Another area which is in need of further investigation is the teacher's development of organizational plans for reading instruction. The areas of concern here are the types of grouping, the decisions which are made which lead to the establishment of groups, the effects of grouping on the management of the classroom, and the numbers of reading groups teachers form for instructional purposes.

Three categories of readers were identified in this particular study, appliers, tacit appliers, and non-appliers. Further research needs to be conducted to investigate if these categories are in fact "real" categories. The further delineation of the perspectives of these readers needs to be undertaken. There is also a need to discover any other categories of readers which may exist.

Another question which needs to be examined is; What is the teacher's use of materials for presenting instruction? Reading educators have documented observations that more than ninety-five percent of elementary school teachers use basal reader texts, but there is little knowledge about how the texts are used or to what degree they are used. There is also a need to discover the procedures teachers employ to make decisions about the use of materials and to what extent teachers allow the use of materials to dictate the content of instruction.

Finally, in this particular study a relationship between the teaching of reading skills and the teaching, use, and application of those same reading skills in another subject area was observed. Further observations of teachers teaching reading skills during reading instruction and the teachers' use and application of the same reading skills in other areas of the elementary school curriculum are needed. In addition to the observations of teachers, further observations and interviews of children about their acquisition, use, and understanding of the purpose and content of reading skills in other subject areas need to be conducted.

REFERENCE NOTES

1. The term "completed" in this context means that each child read the stories, discussed the content of the stories with Mr. Bell during the reading group discussion sessions, and answered numerous questions in the workbook exercises which accompanied each story.

2. Spindler defines the concept EMIC as the view that a native has and the knowledge the native possesses about his/her cultural setting. In this study, the EMIC is the knowledge and views of the culture the teacher and children have about reading and reading instruction in the classroom. An ETIC is an investigator's interpretation of not only what the inhabitants explicitly state but also an interpretation of the implicit knowledge they have (Spindler, 1979).

3. A cultural theme is defined by anthropologist Morris Opler (1945) as "a postulate or position, declared or implied and usually controlling behavior or stimulating activity which is tacitly approved or openly promoted in a society" (p. 198). Spradley (1979) identifies a cultural theme as a cognitive principle which serves as a "relationship among subsystems of cultural meaning" (p. 186). Applying Spradley's definition to the present study, a cultural theme is a cognitive principle which links two or more categories of readers together or provides a common framework of understanding and practice between the children and the teacher. Agar (1976) provides a further description of a cultural theme when he identifies a cultural theme as a broad premise that is expressed in many areas of a "person's cognitive knowledge and is a part of the individual's communicative competence" (Spradley, 1979, p. 222). The idea of a cultural theme is based on the notion that cultures are more than bits and pieces of custom. Indeed, a culture is a complex pattern (Benedict, 1934; Roberts, 1976). That is, every "cultural scene consists of a system of meaning that is integrated into some kind of large pattern" (Spradley, 1980, p. 141). Consequently, cultural themes apply to numerous situations and recur in two or more domains.

4. Cultural domain is a category of cultural meaning that includes other smaller categories (Spradley, 1980). For example, in this study, one domain is a reading group. Within the category reading group there are three smaller domains: appliers; tacit appliers; and non-appliers. Each domain identifies a type of reader within the classroom.

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APPENDIX A

Transcriptions of Reading Group Discussion Sessions

Reading Group 13: Patty's Group

Reading Group 30: Andrea's Group

Reading Group 37: Yearling Group

Reading Group 38: Yearling Group--The Yearling Test

Reading Group 13:
March 27; Thursday

Participants: Patty, Mr. Bell

Mr. Bell: "The story you read was called the "Case of the Whistling Ghost." What's another title you can give that story?"

Patty: "What number?"

Mr. Bell: "Number two."
"O.K. what title did you give it?"

Patty: "The Case of the Boy Who Lied."

Mr. Bell: "Why did you give it that selection?"

Patty: "Um because um he had um this friend um had to um had to missing...he put a on sheet on and whenever he wanted to say fast he whistles."

Mr. Bell: "You said the story was the Case of the Boy Who Lied. Whey did you name it that?"

Patty: "Well because these two other boys came in and blamed it on them and he just made it up. He said whenever he came um the one of the boys came took the camera ran out the back door and when he came in. The other one was in a ghost costume and that's how Encyclopedia knew it was him because how could the boy got through. In there spider webs there and it was not knocked down."

Mr. Bell: "Who were the main characters of the story?"

Patty: "Encyclopedia and his brother."

Mr. Bell: "How did this camera get stolen do you think and why?"

Patty: "Because he was in this um haunted house, he was there were then I think living about forty-eight years. He saw Encyclopedia's brother go into the haunted house and he put a sheet over him and that's how he got him cause he wanted to take pictures in there."

Mr. Bell: "Who got the camera?"

Patty: "The one that had the face mask on."

Mr. Bell: "What was the events leading up to how he got the camera?"

Patty: "By scaring Encyclopedia's brother away."

Mr. Bell: "How did he drop the camera or what?

Patty: "He left it behind."

Mr. Bell: "What reason did Encyclopedia's brother have for wanting to go to the house again?"

Patty: "To show Encyclopedia where he left his camera in there."

Mr. Bell: "That's good. What was the end to it?"

Patty: "So he can show his brother Encyclopedia where he left his camera and so Encyclopedia could see who it was in there."

Mr. Bell: "So he left his camera there because he wanted Enclyclopedia to find it."

Patty: "No. He went in there again because he wanted Encyclopedia to see where he left it."

Mr. Bell: "Why did he take his camera there in the first place?"

Patty: "To take pictures."

Mr. Bell: "Of what?"

Patty: "Of what it was like inside."

Mr. Bell: "Describe what the place looked like."

Patty: "It had spider webs in it. The walls were not nice."

Mr. Bell: "What do you mean not nice?"

Patty: "They had tears. They had big holes in the walls. The paint or whatever was on the walls was torn off and some places didn't look very good."

Mr. Bell: "What did the house look like?"

Patty: "It looked like it was going to fall down from the outside."

Mr. Bell: "How do you think the younger brother felt going into this house?"

Student interruption, Matt: "Do we check these ourselves?"

Mr. Bell: Shakes head yes.

Patty: "Scared."

Mr. Bell: "Do you feel he felt scared both times? Or just the first time?"

Patty: "Mainly the first time."

Mr. Bell: "How did Encyclopedia Brown feel when he was going into the house?"

Patty: "Sort of nervous."

Mr. Bell: "What would make him nervous do you think?"

Patty: "If the ghost showed up in there maybe. But the ghost didn't."

Mr. Bell: "How was he able to prove who committed the...who took the camera?"

Patty: "Because he said the guy who stole the camera that he was missing two...and he said that he whistles and so he that um and when they got to that person he said that two other boys did it and ran out the back door. If they went out the backdoor then the spider they would have knocked over the spider webs. So that's how Encyclopedia knew."

Mr. Bell: "Describe Encyclopedia Brown to me. What's he like?"

Patty: "He's not that scared about the sheet."

Mr. Bell: "What's another thing you can say about him?"

Patty: "He didn't believe his brother very well."

Mr. Bell: "What else? He had to have some other qualities."

Student interruption: "Could I get a drink of water?"

Patty: "He could imagine who started the stuff and..."

Mr. Bell: "So what type in a word or two what can you say about him?"

Student interruption: (inaudible)

Mr. Bell: "Wait until lunch-time." "If he's able to solve all these crimes what can we say about him?"

Patty: "Well he's good at finding out stuff and like that."

Mr. Bell: "So what other words can we use?"

Patty: "Good at things."

Mr. Bell: "How about smart, intelligent? Do those describe him?"

Patty: "Yes."

Mr. Bell: "Foolish describe Encyclopedia Brown?"

Patty: "Some."

Mr. Bell: "How was he foolish?"

Patty: "Well he doesn't believe his brother and all that. And that's what I thought was foolish. He should believe."

Mr. Bell: "Can you think of another word besides foolish that maybe or would be better in describing Encyclopedia Brown?"

Patty: "Not really. He knows what's going on most of the time unless someone tells him."

Mr. Bell: "O.K. if a person's going to be a detective what qualities does that person have to have do you think to make him or her a good detective?"

Patty: "He or she has to know how to tell when someone's lying and have to check out stuff without being scared."

Student interruption: "Mr. Bell may I get a drink?" Mr. Bell motions yes to student.

Patty: "... and know where to find him."

Mr. Bell: "Open up your workbook to page eleven and I will give the words. Circle them number one bruto."

Student interruption, Laura: "Which one is level five? The second one?"

Mr. Bell: "Middle one." "Number two garden. Number three squirrel. Number four pleasant. Number five eleventh. O.K. read these sentences to me out loud."

Patty: "It was a sunny pleasant day. The trees in the garden were in bloom. A grayish squirrel was looking for food. A squirrel saw food hanging in the tree. He shook the tree and on the eighth try."

Mr. Bell: "What try?"

Patty: "Eleventh he broke off the fruit grabbed the food and ran away."

Mr. Bell: "In this part here you're going to read the paragraph and then answer the question. The question will be coming from one of these words here. The answer I mean."

"Over on page twelve they've given you the phonetic spelling of this word. Up here one of these words up here. You have to try and pronounce this word to yourself and decide which of these words is that the phonetic spelling for."

Patty: "What do you mean?"

Mr. Bell: "O.K. so you find the word button up here and write it down there."

Patty: "Oh! I don't remember the word so can I study it a little bit?"

Mr. Bell: "Do you understand that page? Page thirteen, here they've given you some words and they've divided them into syllables and you decide which syllable has the loudest emphasis on it. So when you say the word, one syllable has more force when you say it than the other one. And if you think it's the first syllable you put a little mark after it like that. If you think it's the second syllable you put a little mark after it like that."

Patty: "Oh!"

Mr. Bell: "On page fourteen here are some words that have the letters - gh in them."

Student interruption: "May I take this back?"

Mr. Bell: Shakes his head yes.

Mr. Bell: "-gh sometimes has a certain pronounciation to it. Say the sentences here."

Patty: "I think I see a ghost."

Mr. Bell: "The -gh has a hard -g sound in ghost. Read this one."

Patty: "I have a.... The -gh has a -f sound. The dogs had a fight. The -gh has...sound."

Mr. Bell: "O.K. this one."

Patty: "The dogs had a fight."

Mr. Bell: "The -gh can have three different sounds. Two different sounds and one no sound at all. You're going to say the word down here."

Patty: "Couldn't it have a small sound?"

Mr. Bell: "No! They show a word here with the -gh underlined. You have to decide whether the -gh has a hard -g sound, if it has an -f sound or it has no sound at all."

Patty: "it's hard or s..."

Mr. Bell: "you write down hard -g or -f sound or no sound at all."

"Patty your workbook is going to be due. Circle this page. Your workbook is going to be due tomorrow on the twenty-eighth and I will talk with you about the story on the thirty-first which is Monday."

Patty: "When is this due?"

Mr. Bell: "Thirty-first. And this is the story your're going to read. Do you have any questions?"

Participants: Andrea, Missy, Mr. Bell

Mr. Bell: "...you're going to give the spelling words. Follow the same schedule. Remember if you go to the library your scheduled time by now you know if it's your time to go to the library or not. You'll have book reports this Friday. You may choose the book reports we didn't have time to do last week or you may select a new book."

"Open your workbooks and write down another title please."

Missy: "What was the title called again?"

Mr. Bell: "Freedom Star." "Who were the main characters in this story? Andrea."

Andrea: "Sarah and Will."

Mr. Bell: "What problems did they face? Missy."

Missy: "Well they got captured by slave traders. He took their food."

Mr. Bell: "Are there any problems they faced Andrea?"

Andrea: "Well traveling many miles."

Mr. Bell: "Why would traveling many miles be a problem? Missy."

Missy: "Because they had to trick that one guy to escape so they could go to that one station."

Mr. Bell: "What other problems do you think they encountered."

Missy: "Their feet hurt."

Mr. Bell: "Anything else? Andrea."

Andrea: "Well they didn't have food so they were hungry."

Mr. Bell: "First of all how did the children escape from this one hunter? Missy."

Missy: "They tricked him. Sarah tricked him by thinking her leg was broken. She said she tripped and said she couldn't make it and it was broken. He went to see what was up ahead and they ran away."

Mr. Bell: "Do you think it was right for them to lie? Andrea."

Andrea: "In that case, yah."

Mr. Bell: "Why?"

Andrea: "He was going to take her and her brother to be slaves."

Mr. Bell: "What were these children? What do you think they were escaping from? Missy."

Missy: "Slavery."

Mr. Bell: "What do you think would have happened to them if this slave catcher had taken them back? Missy."

Missy: "They might have seen their mother and father. But they would have to work those long days. Probably die."

Mr. Bell: "Mm."

Missy: "Because they were working too hard."

Mr. Bell: "What do you think the owner would have done when he saw the slaves? Andrea."

Andrea: "Well maybe not...because they were children."

Mr. Bell: "So you think one possibility might have been to let them go and the other possibility was let..."

Andrea: "I guess so."

Mr. Bell: "Anything else?"

Missy: "Maybe whipped them."

Mr. Bell: "Might have punished them in some way. Do you think this story took place in the past, present or future? Missy."

Missy: "Past."

Mr. Bell: "What was the girl Sarah like? Andrea."

Andrea: "She was brave."

Mr. Bell: "What in the story shows she was brave?"

Andrea: (inaudible)

Mr. Bell: "What in particular in the story can you show me she was brave?"

Andrea: "Well when the slave catcher and the owner were close to them in the woods and they were tricking them."

Mr. Bell: "Anything else? Missy what can you say about this girl that would describe her?"

Missy: "If they had stayed they probably would have been a slave and they couldn't get away."

Mr. Bell: "Could you describe Sarah to me? What was she like? Now Andrea said she was brave."

Missy: "She was brave in that she had escaped...because they probably end up being slaves."

Mr. Bell: "Is there anything else besides bravery you can use to describe her?"

Missy: "Maybe sad."

Mr. Bell: "So?"

Missy: "Sad where her mother."

Mr. Bell: "Anything else? Andrea."

Andrea: "She was happy."

Mr. Bell: "What was she happy about?"

Andrea: "When she went to the bus station."

Mr. Bell: "Was that a bus?"

Andrea: "Bus station."

Mr. Bell: "When they say underground station they mean it's a meeting place to escape. Who was the leader? Was Will or Sarah the leader of the two children do you think? Missy."

Missy: "Sarah."

Mr. Bell: "Why do you say Sarah?"

Missy: "Well she is older and he listened to her and he didn't get mad and sore. I'm going here and let that guy catch me."

Mr. Bell: "Open up your workbook to page fifteen. Take the vocabulary pretest on fifteen."

"Group number two would you go out into the hallway and take your spelling test please."

Intercom interruption: "Mr. Bell."

Mr. Bell: "Yes."

Intercom: "On these independent dittos you wanted run. How many copies do you want?"

Mr. Bell: "Eight."

Intercom: "Thank you."

Student interruption: (inaudible)

Student interruption: (inaudible)

Mr. Bell: "See if you can get it done." "Christine It's the wrong date."

Christine: "It's the other one?"

Mr. Bell: "Number one, Andrea."

Student interruption: (inaudible)

Andrea: "Gravity, power to pull us to it."

Mr. Bell: "Number two, Missy."

Missy: "Quality, amount."

Mr. Bell: "What was that word?"

Missy: "Quality, amount."

Mr. Bell: "Quantity. That's right its amount. Next one Andrea."

Andrea: "Solar system, the sun and all the things that move around it."

Mr. Bell: "Number four, Missy."

Missy: "Planetarium, a place to see exhibits about the moon, stars and planets."

Mr. Bell: "The sun, moon, stars and planets."

Missy: "Yah."

Mr. Bell: "Number five, Andrea."

Andrea: "Multiply, add eight hundred fifty-six Twenty-four times."

Mr. Bell: "Number six, Missy."

Missy: "Diagram, drawing."

Mr. Bell: "Number seven, Andrea."

Andrea: "Bob, move up and down."

Mr. Bell: "Number eight, Missy."

Missy: "Force, power."

Mr. Bell: "Nine, Andrea."

Andrea: "Mass, something of strength,"

Mr. Bell: "Mass in this case means amount of material in something. Number ten, Missy."

Missy: "Expressed, shown."

Mr. Bell: "Number eleven, Andrea."

Andrea: "Heavenly bodies, the sun, moon, planets, comets, stars."

Mr. Bell: "Number twelve, Missy."

Missy: "In relation, compared."

Mr. Bell: "Very good. Turn to page sixteen. You're going to read the sentences below and answer the questions in the blue box. You answer the question they'll be asking you the main idea or some fact of something. You put the sentence's letter A, B, C, D, E."

Andrea: "Is there going to be more than one answer?"

Mr. Bell: "Some can have more than one." "At the bottom of the page just cross that part out."

"On page seventeen after you get done reading the story do this page because it's a hidden word puzzle at the top. You're going to try and find words you read in the story and circle them. They're about plantes or stars, astronomy."

"At the bottom of the page."

Missy: "Can you use the book to spell the words?"

Mr. Bell: "Sure." "Then at the botton of the page your're going to fill in the blank from the words that you circled. Now maybe it will be easier for you to do the bottom of the page first to fill in the blank cause you might know what they're talking about, and hunt for the word in the box. You can do it either way. Andrea."

Andrea: "If you know most of them or some of them..."

Mr. Bell: "Page eighteen and nineteen go together. Look at page eighteen first. Sometimes when you look up something under a topic they give you other areas in encyclopedias to look in. For example they said let's say you're looking for information on solar system. Can you turn to astronomies, astronomy, comets and so on to find something on the solar system."

"Turn to page nineteen. Now they've given you a topic. The first one is "the surface of the moon." And they said going back to page eighteen you could have used either the moon or space exploration to find information about the moon. The volumes you'd look in are nine and thirteen. Nine for the moon and thirteen for space exploration. The next one it says the topic they want you to look in is "which is the largest planet in the solar system?" You have to decide what to do. I look on page eighteen. They've given you a list. What would you look under? Then write down the volume number."

Missy: "What if we don't know the largest planet?"

Mr. Bell: "What would you look under? Look over in this selection here."

Missy: "Oh!"

Mr. Bell: "What would you look under to find out what the largest planet was?"

Missy: "Planets."

Mr. Bell: "Right. You might look under planets. And what volume would that be in?"

Missy: "Volume eleven."

Mr. Bell: "Right."

Missy: "Well what if you don't have a second thing?"

Mr. Bell: "Then you don't use it. See they just put down two there just in case you'd need it. Any questions about the workbook?"

"The workbook will be due then on the eighth. The eighth is Thursday. And we'll discuss the story on the ninth."

Missy: "Mr. Bell is that page almost like this page?"

Mr. Bell: "Mm."

Missy: "O.K."

Andrea: "Any extra assignment?"

Mr. Bell: "No, I thought I'd give you a break."

Participants: Monica, Paul, Lezlie, Karl, Heather, Josh, Mr. Bell

Mr. Bell: "In The Yearling of the chapters that you've read so far I think we've learned a little bit more about the Forresters and what they're like. Can you give me some more detailed explanation as to how you feel they are? Paul."

Paul: "They're really very nice except for Lim. He...Penny had said he would...or whatever on or deer so and then he saw that a new carcass so was blaming Penny for everything. He didn't know what had gone on."

Mr. Bell: "Anything else?"

Lezlie: "Well they really had hot tempers. One minute they can be kind and the next minute they're ready to kill someone."

Mr. Bell: "Why do you think they're like that?"

Karl: "Well, they have a different way of life."

Mr. Bell: "How is their way of life different?"

Karl: "They have lots of brothers and they have a lot of big times. And they really been to town more."

Mr. Bell: "How would you like the Forresters to be your neighbors? Heather."

Heather: (inaudible)

Mr. Bell: "Josh."

Josh: "Well, I'd like it a lot because the way they act they probably be interested in a lot of sports."

Mr. Bell: "What makes people the way they are? Lezlie."

Lezlie: "I don't..."

Mr. Bell: "how do you think Penny feels about the Forresters? Monica."

Monica: "Well he likes them and sometimes he really doesn't like some of the things. He's anxious to get them into church. Ma Baxter is alright but wanting to dress up in Slewfoot's thing I think it was suprising."

Mr. Bell: "So how do you summarize how Penny gets along with the Forresters?"

Monica: "He likes them but sometimes some of the things they do he wouldn't do."

Mr. Bell: "Heather."

Heather: (inaudible)

Mr. Bell: "Paul."

Paul: "Well the way he feels about them is he knows that a lot of times they just kill for the fun of it and they don't need all the meat. So he likes them but he doesn't sometimes or a lot of the times. He doesn't like the way they do things."

Mr. Bell: "How do you think the Forresters feel about Penny and the Baxter family? Josh."

Josh: "I think they like them."

Mr. Bell: "What reasons do you think that the Forresters would have to like them?"

Josh: "Well they sometimes share food. They go on hunts together."

Mr. Bell: "Karl."

Karl: "The Forresters are in the building a lot and they use to live with them."

Mr. Bell: "Why do you think that happens?"

Karl: "Well, because Jodi is a lot like the Forresters."

Mr. Bell: "How is he like the Forresters?"

Karl: "He likes to do things the right way. When he gets excited he really gets excited."

Mr. Bell: "Lezlie."

Lezlie: "They help each other out a lot. ..."

Mr. Bell: "Paul."

Paul: "I think they like Penny but sometimes they think he doesn't like to have much fun."

Mr. Bell: "What did you think about the scene in which Penny and Jodi were going over to sleep. What were the feelings mainly going through you? Monica."

Monica: "Excited."

Mr. Bell: "What parts showed that?"

Monica: "When Old Julia followed them and they were chasing him."

Mr. Bell: "Josh."

Josh: "Sorta afraid."

Mr. Bell: "What part do you remember that...?"

Josh: "The part that Monica said and also when they were searching for him. He could have been just right in front of them..."

Mr. Bell: "Anything else?"

Heather: (inaudible)

Mr. Bell: "How did you feel about old Slewfoot and what eventually happended to him? Karl."

Karl: "I think he was getting old so that was a little easier but not much."

Mr. Bell: "What did you find difficult? What did you dislike about it?"

Karl: "Well he always..."

Mr. Bell: "You didn't like him being killed or what?"

Karl: "Well I like...there usually were other people who wanted to go and catch him..."

Mr. Bell: "We'll come back to that. Paul."

Paul: "I think it was kinda scarry for Jodi. Because like when they killed it he was like wobbly in the knees. And another thing that showed he kinda liked the Forresters was he was going to share about half the meat even if they hadn't helped him carry the carcass."

Mr. Bell: "Have we learned anything new about Penny? Anything we can say about his personality that was different? We know more about him. We should be able to describe him more. How would you describe him? Lezlie."

Lezlie: "He's probably more careful."

Mr. Bell: "Is there anything else we can include about him? Monica."

Monica: "Well like when he wanted to like let Ma Baxter he was alright. You know...it shows he would not want her to worry about him."

Mr. Bell: "Very good. What scene in the book do you remember as maybe somewhat sad?"

Lezlie: (inaudible)

Intercom interruption: "Mr. Bell can we have your lunch count right now?"

Mr. Bell: "Oh! Raise your hands if you want hot lunch. Okay we have seven."

Intercom: "Thank you."

Mr. Bell: "Go on."

Lezlie: "...when Grandpa and Oliver were leaving for Boston."

Mr. Bell: "Heather."

Heather: (inaudible)

Mr. Bell: "Josh."

Josh: "Slewfoot was killed."

Mr. Bell: "Monica."

Monica: "When Fodderwing died."

Mr. Bell: "Paul."

Paul: "When Grandma's house was burning. She knew it was because she left a lamp on but they...at first Jodi was saying it was the Forresters."

Mr. Bell: "Why did Jodi say something like that do you think?"

Lezlie: "Well because..."

Josh: (inaudible)

Mr. Bell: "Karl."

Karl: "...they were drunk. I would suspect them too because they were drunk."

Mr. Bell: "How would you describe how this author spends a lot of time talking about scenery, setting . How would you describe that scenery to me? Monica."

Monica: "What scene do you want?"

Mr. Bell: "Any scene..."

Monica: "I'm going to describe Grandma...house."

Mr. Bell: "O.K."

Monica: "It was this old white house with all sorts of vines up and around. And it had a little white picket fence around it and had flowers all over the yard."

Mr. Bell: "Anything else?"

Monica: "It had a chimney."

Mr. Bell: "What would her house look like inside?"

Monica: "I think it would have about two rooms, a bedroom, kitchen, dining room and living room. A bedroom and living room would be one room. The kitchen would be one. The stove would be in one corner and the table would be in the middle and chairs would be in another corner."

Mr. Bell: "What would the house look like? You described to me what the house looked like can you tell me what it would as you walked in the door what would your impression of the house be?"

Monica: "I'd like it."

Mr. Bell: "Why?"

Monica: "Well it was neat."

Mr. Bell: Do you mean it was well kept? She kept it clean?"

Monica: "Yah."

Mr. Bell: "Can you describe a scene for me Karl?"

Karl: "When the Uttles were leaving."

Mr. Bell: "What was the setting?"

Karl: "Dark and the water splashing up against the wall..."

Mr. Bell: "What was the land like? Was the dock there?"

Karl: "no, there was land..."

Mr. Bell: "I don't care. You have to use this up here (pointing to his head) Karl let's go (students laugh)."

Karl: "The dock was pretty long, about ten feet out."

Mr. Bell: "What was the land like? I want to know."

Karl: "It was like a steep bank that went down to the water."

Mr. Bell: "What did it look like? Just a steep bank?"

Karl: "It had grass on it. You couldn't see it at night time."

Mr. Bell: "Just grass nothing else on it?"

Karl: "People's...trees."

Mr. Bell: "How fast was the water moving?"

Karl: "About one mile per hour."

Mr. Bell: "Well it was about the length of a steamboat and..."

Mr. Bell: "What did the steamboat look like?"

Karl: "It was big. It was a wood frame. It had a deck that was white..."

Mr. Bell: "Were there many people on it?"

Karl: "Well only the sailors and a few passengers."

Mr. Bell: "Lezlie."

Lezlie: "Well, I can describe the same one."

Mr. Bell: "How did you see it?"

Lezlie: "The dock it really wasn't long just about five feet out.... And the land it was very grassy. There were trees. The steam...."

Mr. Bell: "Josh what about you? What setting can you describe us?"

Josh: "Well...were tracking down this deer and they didn't know that it was Flag...half an hour."

Mr. Bell: "What was the setting?"

Josh: "It was sorta like a dirt path and it had a little grass, stones on the path, footprints, deer prints."

Mr. Bell: "Anything else?"

Josh: "And there were a bunch of trees and...grass on either side and a...branch hanged right over the path."

Mr. Bell: "Paul."

Paul: "I described the scene like when they were tracking Slewfoot. Like when he was some ten feet away from them. He still wasn't in sight but there were a lot of trees around and with twigs and bushes. So there's no path really but they would break through the shrubs and weeds all over. It was dark a little bit dark so you couldn't see everything. It was dim light plus the trees were blocking out the rays of the sun. Julia and the other dogs barking had a little opening further.... There was a little small stream going by."

Mr. Bell: "Your next assignment is to finish the book."

Students in unison: "What about Heather?"

Mr. Bell: "I'm sorry Heather."

Heather: "I'll describe the scene of the really big church."

Mr. Bell: "When you say really big compared to the size of this room?"

Heather: "About."

Mr. Bell: "What were the benches like to sit on?"

Heather: "...huge."

Mr. Bell: "How were they to sit on?"

Heather: (inaudible)

Mr. Bell: "What did the outside of the church look like?"

Heather (inaudible)

Mr. Bell: "What did the church look like outside?"

Heather: "There was a big bell on it."

Mr. Bell: "What color was the church?"

Heather: "White?"

Mr. Bell: "You tell me."

Heather: "Well kinda yellow."

Mr. Bell: "What do you think it was like to be inside this church with all the congregation?"

Heather: "...cozy."

Mr. Bell: "Why do you think it was cozy?"

Heather: (inaudible)

Paul: "I've got a different description of the church. On the inside there are these wooden pews sitting like the two rows but then there's an aisle down the middle of them. If you sit on them with bare legs you can get splinters. There's a Christmas tree in one corner with all the ornaments with like popcorn string maybe apple. Then there's one of those old burning stoves in the other corner to heat the place. A little what do you call it bench or booth or whatever that the pastor...."

Mr. Bell: "Pulpit."

Paul: "Pulpit that the pastor would preach from. And maybe on that day a table behind or to the side of the Christmas tree with some food on it. On the outside it would be kinda like this color and it would have a tall steeple with some flower gardens to the sides and some steps going up into it."

Mr. Bell: "Good description. Josh."

Josh: "Well, I'd say that...."

Lezlie: "Well, I got another picture of this church. It's kinda like small. It's kinda two stories...."

Mr. Bell: "I think that was a good description of the one that was in the book here."

"The next assignment is to finish the book. I want you to tell me or be able to tell me how Penny has changed from beginning to end of the story. And particularly how Jodi has changed from the very first time you have met him in the story to the very end of it. And tell me if you think it was a good change. Any questions about the assignment? The assignment will be due next Wednesday. The entire book must be finished by next Wednesday.

Reading Group 38:
May 28; Wednesday

Participants: Josh, Heather, Karl, Lezlie, Paul, Mr. Bell (Monica had not finished assignment-was sent back to her desk)

Mr. Bell: "Don't forget to sign up for hot lunch please."

"In the story as you're well aware the author created several different types of moods. In the last chapter what would you say the emphasis or the major mood was? Josh."

Josh: "Well, sadness."

Mr. Bell: "What was the result? Heather."

Heather: "Well cause Jodi was being bad."

Mr. Bell: "Who was being bad?"

Heather: "Flag."

Mr. Bell: "Karl, anything to add to that?"

Karl: "Well...Jodi didn't want to shoot Flag."

Mr. Bell: "Who asked Jodi to kill Flag? Lezlie."

Lezlie: "His father."

Mr. Bell: "You think his father was right in telling Jodi that he had to kill Flag? Paul."

Paul: "In a way he was kind of right because it was killing the crops and just was getting too...so it should have been back to wild. But he was wrong cause maybe they just should have put it back into the wild some miles away and somehow trick it so it wouldn't follow them back."

Mr. Bell: "How would you describe Jodi's mood after he had killed Flag? Lezlie."

Lezlie: "He's kinda down on himself."

Mr. Bell: "What reasons can you give me for him being mad at himself?"

Lezlie: "Well because he shot him."

Mr. Bell: "Anything else, Karl? Any other feelings you think that Jodi had?"

Karl: "Well he was mad at his pa because he had, Jodi thought, turned against him."

Mr. Bell: "Paul."

Paul: "And he was really, really grieving, blue. Because he felt very sad cause he had been like one of his only friends for a long time."

Mr. Bell: "How did Jodi after he killed Flag, what did he do? Heather."

Heather: (inaudible)

Mr. Bell: "Do you think it was wise for him to do that? or the best thing for him to do that? Josh."

Josh: "Well it was really a smart thing to do but it was...and run away but when he's drawn back it's sort of like my Mom had run away and she had never come back for lunch."

Mr. Bell: "How do you feel Jodi is going to be like when he gets to be Penny's age? Paul."

Paul: "I think maybe he'll be pretty kind to animals still, but he'll still know that he has to kill for the food. But it will be a little bit harder for him. He'll think of them as friends."

Mr. Bell: "What else do you think Jodi's going to be like? Lezlie."

Lezlie: "I think he'll be like his son. Also have a fawn. I think he's going to give him like you're going to have to kill it someday yourself...."

Mr. Bell: "Heather anything else you can add to what you think Jodi's going to do when he gets older."

"Do you think Jodi is going to stay in that area or do you think he's going to move."

Karl: "Well if after a while when Jodi grows older if Penny and Ma Baxter move somewhere else to make an easier life.... Well if they move away I think Jodi will still stay there and take care of the place."

Mr. Bell: "What did you think? How did you feel about Penny when he told Jodi to kill Flag? Josh."

Josh: "Pretty upset."

Mr. Bell: "Paul."

Paul: "It'd be like as soon as they told him he'd be almost like paralyzed by what the thinking of having to kill Flag. Like really being scared. Not wanting to do it. Not wanting to be sad."

Mr. Bell: "How do you think Ma Baxter felt about this? Did she feel like Penny or did she feel another way? Heather."

Heather: "Well she didn't really think very much about...."

Mr. Bell: "What was Jodi like at the beginning of the story and has Jodi changed at all at the end of the story? Lezlie."

Lezlie: "He tended to grow up."

Mr. Bell: "Now what do you mean has grown up? What point has shown you he has grown up?"

Lezlie: "Well since his father was hurt he had to help around the place and he couldn't have as much time to play."

Mr. Bell: "Karl."

Karl: "He ran away. That showed that he wasn't fully grown up yet. He was still...."

Mr. Bell: "Paul anything different?"

Student information: "May I get a drink?"

Mr. Bell: "Mm."

Paul: "He has to face more facts. He doesn't have as much to goof-off or play. But he really has become more gorwn up. So he's more able. He does more things. He can be trusted more."

Mr. Bell: "Do you think Penny has changed from the beginning of this story? Josh."

Josh: "Well at the beginning he was a little more like Jodi was. He liked to do things that Jodi did. He made his work and he took Jodi on hunts quite often. He'd probably have Jodi...by himself or he would just like sit on...while Jodi is hunting."

Mr. Bell: "What do you think Heather?"

Heather: (inaudible)

Mr. Bell: "What were you're impressions of Ma Baxter throughout the story? Lezlie."

Lezlie: "She changed. The way she talks is sort of a...."

Mr. Bell: "Paul."

Paul: "I think she changed a little bit. Like she understood things a little more about what was happening to Jodi and Penny. So she grew to know more about the family. She became a little bit more gentle. But she was still kind of harsh and gloomy moods."

Mr. Bell: "What do you think? How do you think Jodi's relationship is going to be with the Forresters? Karl."

Karl: "Well since about when those guys left I didn't think he was going to bother with the Forresters."

"Because Buck...went trade. I think they went for a long time. Earlier some of the...came back."

Mr. Bell: "What do you feel Heather?"

Heather: "Well I think that Buck will stay Jodi's friend."

Mr. Bell: "Have the Forresters changed at all from the beginning to the end of the story? Paul."

Paul: "I wouldn't say that."

Mr. Bell: "Josh."

Josh: "Well at the beginning they were nice to each other and later on they fought with each other and didn't talk as much. And then later on they were well a little more friendly and then they almost wouldn't talk."

Mr. Bell: "Karl."

Karl: "Well they adjusted to the Baxters. Now they are pretty good neighbors. But Penny still doesn't like the.... And they've done more things together. They've done a round up hunting and they've done a lot more things together than in the beginning. At the beginning they were just neighbors."

Mr. Bell: "O.K. Put your name on a piece of paper please. I have a couple of questions I want to ask you. You don't need to write down the question obviously."

Paul: "Do you like put one, two, three, four?"

Mr. Bell: "Yes." "Number one: What was the author's purpose in writing "The Yearling?"

"The second question: What was the climax of The Yearling? What was the high point or climax of The Yearling?"

"Question number three: Who were the main characters?"

Karl: "out of how many?"

Mr. Bell: "I said who were the main characters?"

Intercom interruption: "Steve. I mean Mr. Bell."

Mr. Bell: "Yes."

Intercom: "Lunch please."

Mr. Bell: "Oh! How many of you want hot lunch? Please raise your hands. Six. Angie would you take it down in case she didn't hear it."

"Next question: Was Jodi right in killing Flag? I want you to tell me yes or no and why. Was Jodi right in killing Flag? Why?

Next question: After Oliver came home what major event happened next? After Oliver came home the first time what major event happened next?"

Student interruption: "May I go to the library because I already have two books in my basket?"

Student interruption: "May I go to the library?"

Mr. Bell: "Next question: How would you describe the relationship between Jodi and Flag?"

Student interruption: (inaudible)

Mr. Bell: "And the last question. In the entire book what scene or setting do you think you'll remember? What striking scene or setting do you think you'll remember? Just answer it in one or two sentences. When you're done with that you can hand in your papers. You can go back to your seats then."

Student interruption: "May I go to the bathroom?"

Student interruption: "Can I go to the bathroom?"